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Predation and Animal Attacks in British Literature“*

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1 Introduction

Why, when humans are the most careless, voracious, omnivorous destroyer of life on earth, that it is a myriad of other creatures who are demonized as such? (Alaimo, 279)

I grew up in a safe country and in a loving, protective family environment. Danger and fear were mostly pleasant shivers sent up and down my spine by stories my parents would read to me. Then came the talk of acid rain. I did not understand what was meant but it scared me, planting the thought of an invisible, intangible danger into my head. Then came the cloud of Chernobyl. In kindergarten, we heard the sirens and soon after, the playground was closed and the sandboxes of my village were declared taboo. Danger, although invisible, had become tangible, had adopted a name. There was also the sticker of a great white shark with open jaws on the cellar door. It scared me so much that I was sometimes even afraid to bathe in the bathtub. Real animals to be afraid of, however, were rare. The most dangerous organisms one could have encountered in the woods then were, perhaps, ticks, mushrooms and wild boars. There were no large predators left in the local ecosystem and the only way to watch them was in zoos and on TV. In his 1977 essay *Why Look at Animals?* Berger diagnoses that in the last centuries animals have gradually disappeared from everyday life in Western society and criticizes their marginalization as mere objects to be gazed at. Gregersdotter et al. posit:

The animals that people do encounter are usually not “wild” animals who behave as such: pets are seen as family members and zoo animals are domesticated [...] However, while we have all but rid the urban and suburban West of animals, we have filled the resulting void with signs that remind us of their absence – though the wild animals themselves are gone, images of animals that invade culture proliferate (206)

The cultural representations of predators I was exposed to as a child can be categorized into portrayals of animals as magnificent, beautiful creatures and portrayals of monsters, “red in tooth and claw”, to quote a famous line of Tennyson¹,

¹ The line is taken from his 1849 poem *In Memoriam A.H.H.* (LVI, stanza 4).

TV documentaries showing lions, tigers, bears or wolves roaming wild conveyed images of wonder, Spielberg's *Jaws*, showing a shark relentlessly hunting people, conveyed images of terror.

This thesis will shed light on the representation of animal-human predation in selected works of British literature. It will explore which creative strategies the texts employ to portray this phenomenon, which roles they assign to predators and humans in this form of animal-human conflict and which images of animals and humans involved in this conflict they convey. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), a text from the Augustan period and the historical age of the Enlightenment, John Henry Patterson's *The Man-eaters of Tsavo and Other East-African Adventures* (1907), a text of the Victorian period² and the historical age of Empire, and Daphne du Maurier's *The Birds* (1952), a text of the modern period and the historical era of modernity, will be examined individually, followed by a comparative analysis. The study strives to trace some of the developments the literary images, roles and functions of predators and predation have taken over the course of time and to investigate sociohistorical influences on the literary representation of predation.

The study will examine the human-animal relationship in the texts and focus on aspects of animal agency, animal alterity and anthropomorphism, central topics in the field of literary animal studies (cf. Ortiz-Robles, cf. Borkfelt, cf. McHugh), which will be introduced and discussed based on literary examples in chapters three and four. Shapiro and Copeland define literary animal studies, a subdiscipline of the burgeoning interdisciplinary field of animal studies, as "a literary criticism perspective on animal issues [...] a point of view, a form of consciousness, a way to read any work of fiction" (quoted in McHugh, 1). McHugh points out that there are several ways of reading animals and that literary animal studies comprises many methods (1). Shapiro and Copeland list some central approaches, as for instance the judging of "robust and respectful" representations of animals from "reductive and disrespectful" ones, the analysis "of forms of animals in writing (symbols, voices, characters)" and the contextualization "of literary representations of animals amid histories and cultures of

² The publication date of the text falls into the Edwardian period, however, the events it recounts happened in 1898.

human-animal relations” (paraphrased by McHugh, 1). McHugh posits that there is no central method or interpretational approach shared by scholars of literary animal studies, which she views as a potentially beneficial condition, and regards the development of approaches that synthesize the diverse methods and theories of the field and “take literary animals seriously” as an important future objective (cf. 6-7).

The analysis will also examine selected aspects from an ecocritical perspective. Like literary animal studies, ecocriticism is a wide, diverse field. Glofelty (quoted in Wallace and Armbruster, 1) states that it emerged as a “recognizable critical school” in 1993 and defines it as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment”. Like literary animal studies, ecocriticism is signified by a diversity of approaches, theories and methods. Clark (cf. 2) states that central aspects on which scholars of ecocriticism focus are anthropocentrism, a concept which will be examined in chapters 3 and 4, the category of ‘place’ (e.g. how wilderness is perceived) and questions regarding the perception of nature (e.g. how/if nature is viewed as a mere resource). This paper, to use McHugh’s words, takes both literary animals and environment seriously and will attempt to synthesize approaches of animal studies and ecocriticism in its analysis of texts.

In the following, the term ‘animal’ is employed to signify members of the biological kingdom ‘Animalia’ other than human animals. This differentiation is not to suggest humans and animals were separated by a biological barrier and is applied in full recognition of *homo sapiens*’ place among all other animals. The term ‘nonhuman animal’, used, for instance, by animal rights activists and scholars of various fields studying animals (cf. Wise), is recognized as an important addition to the terminological inventory as a non-hierarchical term that, among other aspects, emphasizes that animals and humans are both members of the animal kingdom. This examination will mainly use the term ‘animal’ because it facilitates conceptual distinction in the analytical discussion of human-animal relations in the texts.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines ‘predation’, among other definitions, as “the killing by one living organism of another for food”. In the following, the premise of killing for food is understood as central criterion differentiating predatory behavior from other forms of aggressive animal behavior, representations of which will also be examined.

In this paper, the term 'attack' is understood as aggressive or antagonistic behavior, mainly – but not exclusively -involving physical force, directed against oneself or another entity.

McHugh points out that “animals abound in literature [...] but have rarely been the focal point of systematic literary study [and] have been seen first and foremost as dissembling humans, as at best metaphorically speaking” (1). This study will focus on literary animals that bear resemblance to 'actual' animals, that is to say, literary animals with a physique similar to and with behavior at least associable to that of biological animals. Gregersdotter et al. describe the criteria of animals by which they define whether a film featuring them can be regarded as pertinent to animal horror cinema and point out difficulties of distinction:

By animal horror cinema we mean films where the portrayed animals retains (sic) a resemblance to actual animal species. Thus, by animal horror we do not refer to movies that feature an otherworldly, supernatural creature [...] At the same time, it must be said that the line between such categories is notoriously difficult to draw, however, because animal horror cinema has always blurred the distinction between 'realist' representation and what it has been able to invent through imagination. (4)

This paper does not aim to draw a definitive line between what Gregersdotter et al., using parenthesis, refer to as 'realist' representation and, to again use their words, what texts are able to invent through imagination and is particularly interested in the differences between the literary animals of the type outlined above and the biological ones they resemble. Therefore, resemblance is the relevant criterion for this study, whereas biological verisimilitude is neither required nor expected, although aspects of cultural and generic verisimilitude will be discussed in the analytical chapters. Allegorical representations of animals, such as the talking animals of fables, and representations in which animals function merely as symbols will not be analyzed in detail, neither will representations of monstrous creatures, hybrid creatures or prehistoric animals be discussed. However, aspects of monstrosity will be examined and allegorical and symbolical aspects will be addressed as well, however, not in expectation that literary animals must stand for something else, an assumption that - according to Allen (10) - governs many critical approaches, but in full recognition that they *can* have symbolical meanings.

2 Literature review

Literature research for this paper yielded surprising results. While the corpus of scientific literature on animals in fiction is huge, it proved difficult to find literature with a focus on the representation of animal-human predation or animal attacks. Discussing the scientific literature on animal horror cinema, Gregersdotter et al., who in 2015 published the first comprehensive study of the genre, state that:

While cinematic representations of animals have been studied for decades, the focus of this volume is on the mechanisms and ideologies of horror in relation between human and non-human animals on film. The reason why this is the first anthology of its kind might be that, with the exception of some notable classics, [...] animal horror cinema has long been seen as a low-budget, low-quality form of entertainment that is largely disconnected from serious cultural debates. (Gregersdotter et al., 5)

Tsutsui points out that conceptions of nature in science fiction and monster films have not yet received sufficient scholarly attention (2018, cf. 252). Alaimo (2001, 279) states that “ecocriticism has largely ignored monstrous nature and instead tends to focus on texts that portray nature in a favorable light”. In the 2018 Palgrave Handbook on Horror Literature, Murphy states:

However, although the role played by animals in ecohorror cinema has been acknowledged, little attention has yet been paid to works of horror *fiction* in which animal antagonists feature. Nor has the broader representation of animals in horror fiction been much considered. (258)

While these appraisals only concern the current state of research regarding specific genres of film or literature, similar observations were made during the perusal of scholarly texts on predators and predation in British literature. Predators, as will be shown, play an important role in several genres of Victorian culture, however, appear not to be a favorite subject of literary criticism. In the essay collection *Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Mazzeno and Morrison, eds.) animal abuse, vivisection, zoos, petkeeping, the Acclimatization debate etc. are discussed, dogs, horses, beetles and cats are examined and their representations as companions,

outcasts, political enemies etc. are analyzed, however, none of the contributing scholars discuss animal attacks or predators and only a few of them address aspects of animal antagonism. The contributions to the collection *Victorians and their Animals* (Ayres) do not examine representations of predatory animals or animal attacks either. Similar situations were encountered in the majority of texts discussing animals. Murphy's contribution to the Palgrave Handbook is one of the few works in which animal attack narratives featuring non-allegorical animals are, more or less, comprehensively discussed, albeit only those pertaining to the horror genre. There are no monographies on animal-human predation or animal attacks in fiction and most of the topic-related studies or interpretations referenced in this paper do neither focus on the representation of predation nor on that of animal attacks or animal aggression. Instead, they are more interested in other forms of behavior and other forms of animal-human interaction or focus on symbolical aspects and/or cultural and historical context. There are some notable exceptions, however, especially Mary Bellanca's and Gina Wisker's essays on du Maurier's *The Birds*, Stacy Alaimo's essay on 'Monstrous Natures' in film and Philip Armstrong's full-length study *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity*. The following analysis will attempt to bridge rather than fill the gap in scientific literature by combining close examinations of the literary portrayal of aggressive animal behavior with cultural contextualizations and symbolical interpretations.

3 Predators and predation in science, media, law and philosophy

The following subchapters will discuss biological, philosophical, legal and cultural aspects of animal-human predation and will also address the questions why certain dangerous animals fascinate and terrify people more than others and which role media and popular culture play in regards to the public perception of dangerous animals.

3.1 Vilification, species framing and predator charisma

According to Ritchie and Roser, in 2016 around 1.5 of the worldwide total of ca. 56 million human deaths were animal-related (human and non-human). They list mosquitoes as the deadliest animals, indirectly responsible for ca. 780.000 deaths through the transmission of diseases. Humans rank second with 546.000 deaths, attributable to homicides, war and terrorism. Snakes³, third on the list, killed around 75.000 people, followed by sandflies (14.000 deaths due to Leishmaniasis), dogs (13.000) and freshwater snails (10.000 due to Schistosomiasis). In comparison, very few human fatalities were caused by large non-human predators. Four people were killed by sharks, ten by wolves, 50 by tigers, 100 by lions and 1000 by crocodilians. deaths.

The relative rarity of fatal attacks of large predators is in contrast to the media coverage they receive. Hardly a week goes by without news reports of shark bites, tiger maulings or attacks by other physically impressive predators. *Google News* currently lists almost 100 million results for the search term ‘animal attack’⁴, the search term ‘tiger attack’ yields over eight million results, ‘shark attack’ over six million, while ‘sandfly’ yields less than 5.000 hits and ‘leishmaniasis’ under 40.000. Spectacular headlines such as “Indonesian Woman Swallowed Whole By 23-Foot Python”⁵ or “Great White Shark Attacks and Kills Diver, Rescue Team Still Searching the Ocean”⁶ can be found among the first twenty search results for ‘animal attack’. Large predators also figure prominently in documentaries or pseudo-documentaries, such as the 1990ies Fox series *When Animals Attack!*, described by Vilanilam (176) as a particularly violent show in the tradition of the shockumentary genre, or Discovery Channel’s *Shark Week*, a shark-themed programming block, which started in 1988 and is still broadcast today, making it the longest-running programming event in the history of cable TV (cf. Fetters),

³ The study does not provide any details on the snake-related deaths. According to the USGS, on average one to two people are killed by constrictor snakes per year worldwide, thus it is safe to assume that almost all of the fatalities were caused by envenomation.

⁴ Search conducted on 23 February 2020, using the keywords ‘animal attack’ with parenthesis operator (breve: p.o.), resulting in 99.600.000 hits, ‘tiger attack’ with p.o. 8.070.000, ‘shark attack’ with p.o. 6.120.000, ‘sandfly’ 4.920, ‘leishmaniasis’ 38.600.

⁵ See Miller, Haley; Huffington Post.

⁶ See Murdock; Newsweek.

or, as Fetters puts it, a pop-culture Leviathan. Bombieri et al. state that “although⁷ predator attacks on humans are rare, they create lasting media attention, and the way the media covers them might affect people's risk perception” (577). Comparing the ranking of species on Ritchie’s and Roser’s list to the public attention they generate, it could be argued that the actual risk emanating from them is inversely proportional to their perceived or communicated dangerousness. In their content analysis of media reports on predator attacks, Bombieri et al. found a bias in coverage. Reports of attacks involving certain species or species groups, foremost sharks and leopards, were most likely to contain graphic elements, whereas reports of attacks by bears or canids were comparatively neutral. Bornatowski et al. point out that sharks are especially prone to being negatively framed and also diagnose a geographic bias in media reporting. They state that:

Predator-human conflicts involving terrestrial mammals occur predominantly in developing" nations (>90%) while aquatic predator-human conflicts occur (65%) and are principally reported from developed nations. Media reporting of sharks is dominated by attacks on humans and sensationalized documentation of incidences compared to those involving terrestrial species. As a result, high media coverage of shark-human conflicts may lead humans to overestimate the risk of being attacked. (32)

Pepin-Neff states that the intensive media coverage of shark attacks makes them appear more common than they really are and subsumes the phenomenon as an example of ‘availability heuristic’, defined by Tversky and Kahnemann as “a judgmental heuristic in which a person evaluates the frequency of classes or the probability of events by availability, i.e., by the ease with which relevant instances come to mind” (207). Angelici discusses the framing of animals as ‘man-eaters’ and states that the “fear that is displayed for any species in any specific area rarely seems [...] related to the relevant objective risk of attack” and claims that “the fear of man-eating is filtered through complex social filters” (357). Media reports on animal attacks and the representation of predators in popular culture can be regarded as such filters, influencing the public perception of certain species. The media coverage of the Jersey shore incidents, for instance, is regarded to have had significant impact on the way

⁷ One might argue that the rarity of attacks by large predators is the cause of the attention they receive by the media.

sharks were seen by the American public and to also have initiated a major revision of opinions within the scientific community. In 1916, five people were injured in a spate of shark attacks along the coast of New Jersey, four of them fatally. Shortly after the attacks, a great white shark with human remains in its stomach was caught and was subsequently labeled the 'Jersey man-eater' but to this day, species and number of animals involved in the attacks are a matter of scientific debate (cf. Fernicola, 184). According to McCall, media reports on the incidents caused a nationwide shark panic, significantly impacting seaside tourism in New Jersey. In response, shark nets were installed and large-scale shark hunts were organized (cf. Fernicola 67-70). The *New York Times* published letters which linked the attacks to 'vicious sea turtles' (c.f. Barret) or the maneuvers of German U-boats near the US coast (cf. A.M.E.). In the wake of the hysteria, sharks, which had previously been regarded as harmless or timid, came to be viewed as dangerous killing machines (cf. Fernicola, 67-95), even by parts of the scientific community. After the incidents, researchers Nichols and Murphy published an article in which they characterize sharks as follows:

There is something peculiar sinister in the shark's make-up. The sight of his dark, lean fin [...] cutting zig-zags in the surface of some quiet, sparkling summer sea [...] suggests an evil spirit. His leering, chinless face, his great mouth with its row of knife-like teeth [...] his brutal, nerveless vitality [...] fail to elicit the admiration one feels for the dashing, brilliant [...] bluefish, tunny, or salmon. (Nichols and Murphy, quoted by Capuzzo, 285)

According to Fernicola, before 1916 several American scholars believed that sharks living in the temperate waters of the Northern Hemisphere - in contrast to those inhabiting the southern oceans - posed no threat to humans (cf. xxvi-xxviii), a notion that might have been influenced by racist-culturalist conceits of superiority. After the attacks, such assumptions had to be revised, in some cases accompanied by media exposure, such as in the case of Frederic Lucas, then director of the American Museum of Natural History and before the incidents doubter of sharks' dangerousness, who was singled out by the *New York Times* in a front page article titled "Science admits its error". According to Ellis (1989, 209), the Jersey Shore attacks have not only inspired a large number of studies and documentaries but also Peter Benchley's 1974

bestselling novel *Jaws*, which together with Steven Spielberg's 1975 film adaptation of the same name has arguably affected the public image of sharks even more dramatically than the media coverage of the 1916 incidents, particularly that of the great white shark. Crimmen (quoted by Colwell) views *Jaws* as a turning point for the species and regards the portrayal of the animals as vengeful creatures as the central problem created by both book and film. He further states that "thousands of fishers set out to catch trophy sharks after seeing *Jaws* [with] no remorse, since there was this mindset that they were man-killers". Hyenas are another vilified predator species. Sommerville (2020) states that they are commonly perceived as nature's villains and points out that in press and popular media they are frequently misrepresented as cowardly, evil and contemptuous creatures, such as in the BBC's 2018 *Dynasties* series or the Disney movies *The Lion King* (both the 1994 and the 2019 version). Species-specific vilification is not limited to large predators, however. In 2015, following news reports of alleged seagull attacks on humans and pets in the UK, there were public calls for culls and David Cameron, then prime minister, declared the country had a 'seagull problem' (cf. Carr & Reyes-Galindo, 1). Carr and Reyes-Galindo analyzed the public discourse and found that the animals were demonized in many press articles with anthropomorphic anti-social cue adjectives such as 'thieving', 'sadistic' or 'psychotic', they were also called 'cannibals', 'killers' and 'monsters' (cf. 10). Cultural representations can also positively influence the public perception of a species. Ducarme et al. (3) state that "the killer whale (*Orcinus orca*) in spite of its frightening name turned out to be a famous charismatic species after the successful movie *Free Willy* (1993)", which is about the friendship between a boy and a captive orca, threatened by human, not animal villains.

Apart from cultural misinterpretation, the negative bias against certain species can be explained by other factors. In the case of hyenas, Sommerville (2020) states that their unique vocalizations, by some misinterpreted as malicious mimicry of human voices, and their propensity to dig up graves and to eat carrion, in many cultures associated with uncleanness, contribute to their negative image. In the case of sharks, it might be argued that the excessive fear of them is connected to their intimidating physique and the aquatic environment in which they are encountered. In the water, humans are more vulnerable and have fewer chances of escape from or avoidance of attacks by

predators than on land, their possibility to exert control is severely limited and thus is their possibility to take influence on the outcome of an encounter. Ropeik points out that the psychological aspects of suffering, uncertainty, powerlessness and high awareness intrinsically connected to the idea of being attacked by a shark make it particularly frightening. The fear of being seized from below by a creature with enormous jaws might be fueled by vilifying portrayals of sharks in media and popular culture, yet according to marine biologist Chapman, *galeophobia*, the fear of sharks, in itself is not irrational, as it engenders, what she calls, a 'healthy respect' (cf. 96) of these formidable predators, which, of course, pose a potential threat to humans. Chapman emphasizes, however, that humans are not part of their regular diet and she points out that the chances of being attacked or killed by a shark are statistically negligible (cf. 43).

The physical characteristics of sharks, e.g. the shape and color of their eyes, the number and size of their teeth, the roughness of their skin or - in the case of some species such as the tiger shark or the great white shark – their impressive dimensions are another factor which might contribute to galeophobia. In their study of animal charisma, Albert et al. singled out 20 animal species⁸ or species groups as the most charismatic of the animal kingdom based on the frequency of appearance on zoo websites and film posters and had participants rate them in the categories *rare*, *endangered*, *beautiful*, *cute*, *impressive*, and *dangerous*, which the researchers regard as key traits of charismatic species. No participant associated the great white shark with 'cuteness', very few participants labeled the crocodile as cute, whereas both species were ranked highest in the category 'dangerousness'. Other large predatory species such as lion, tiger, leopard, cheetah, wolf or polar bear scored significantly higher in the category 'cuteness', the lion, however, reached similar levels in the category 'dangerousness' as the great white shark and the crocodile. All predatory species were rated similarly in the category 'impressiveness'. The difference between mammalian and non-mammalian predators in the category 'cuteness' might be attributable to the "general appeal of species that are phylogenetically or physiognomically closer to humans", as Albert et al. put it (7). Furthermore, the relative

⁸ Tiger, lion, elephant, giraffe, leopard, panda, cheetah, polar bear, wolf, gorilla, chimp, zebra, hippo, shark, crocodile, dolphin, rhino, bear, koala, whale.

ease of relatability might explain why out of the 20 most charismatic species listed by Albert et al. 18 are mammals. The combined appeal of dangerousness⁹, physical impressiveness and, arguably, rareness might account for the prominent position of large carnivorous predators, which make up 10 of the 20 species or species groups on the list, six of them vulnerable or endangered according to the IUCN Red List¹⁰. In their study on species charisma in the context of conservation biology, Ducarme et al. point out the attractiveness of large predatory animals and state that top predators are the most charismatic species (cf. 3). Based on criteria such as elevated position on the trophic ladder (a term similar in meaning to ‘food chain’) and regulator-role within an ecosystem, which according to Wallach et al. (cf. 1) are widely viewed as primary characteristics of apex predators, another term for top predators, most – if not all - predator species listed by Albert et al. can be regarded as members of this elite group¹¹. With the exception of dolphins and cheetahs, all of them are known to occasionally prey on humans (cf. Angelici, 358-359), individual specimen of these species purportedly on a more or less regular basis, in which case they are sometimes referred to as problem animals, rogue animals or – colloquially – as man-eaters ((cf. Angelici 8).

3.2 Man-eaters –biological and cultural aspects of anthropophagy

In most human societies there is a strong taboo against anthropophagy. Obeyesekere points out that the cannibalism taboo “preserves the integrity and continuity of the human community”, yet he states that what he calls ‘mortuary anthropophagy’, the post-mortem consumption of human body parts by other humans in ritual contexts, has been reported for several societies (cf. 16). This indicates that there are differences regarding the permissibility of anthropophagy depending on the context in which it occurs. Obeyesekere states that it is – in some societies- tolerated or practiced under

⁹ With exception of the dolphin, all carnivores scored high in the category “dangerous”, with the crocodile reaching the highest levels.

¹⁰ Tiger, lion, leopard, cheetah, polar bear, great white shark are either vulnerable or endangered according to version 2019-3 of the Red List, while wolf, crocodile (with the exception of some vulnerable or endangered subspecies), dolphin and brown bear are listed as ‘least concern’.

¹¹ Wallach et al. emphasize that the categorization of predators is ambiguous. Restrictive definitions view only predators that are not preyed upon by other species as top or apex predators. Wallach et al. point out a species’ ability to self-regulate its population levels – as opposed to extrinsic control through other predators - as a unique quality of apex predators (cf. 1-5).

the condition that it “does not entail the actual killing of a member of one’s group” (16). Somewhat similar differentiations can be observed regarding the public perception of and reaction to anthropophagic behavior in animals. In the context of necrophagy, bacteria, beetles, flies, mites and moths, the dominant organisms involved in the decomposition of dead bodies¹², can be regarded as the most prolific anthropophagi. While the idea of being eaten by such organisms might be viewed as disgusting by some people, these ‘man-eaters’ do not regularly cause mass panics.

Matters are different in the case of animals that target live humans. There are many anthropophagic animals, leeches, ticks, sandflies, bedbugs or fleas, to name just a few species, that regularly ‘attack’ humans and consume their blood. Certain animals, such as some mosquito species, have a strong preference for humans (cf. Scott and Takken). Animals such as these can pose a serious health risk and, as Ritchie’s and Roser’s list shows, are responsible for most animal-related human deaths. While they are the subjects of media reports, eradication campaigns and in some cases even are at the center of mass hysteria cases, such as the bedbugs, which are comparatively harmless but have received significant media coverage (cf. Segal), their parasitic anthropophagy is explicitly differentiated from the predatory anthropophagy of other animals. A common scientific label for small species that prefer humans is ‘anthrophilic’ (cf. Scott and Takken), defined by the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary as “attracted to humans especially as a source of food” and could be literally translated as human-loving, combining the words *ánthrōpos*, Greek for human, and *philía*, Greek for love, friendship or affection (cf. Liddell-Scott). In contrast, large and/or dangerous predators that are attracted to humans as a source of food are often¹³ colloquially called ‘man-eaters’, a powerful term packing an “atavistic punch”, as Quammen (5) puts it, that is reserved for animals that hunt and kill humans before they eat them. Conservation biologists have criticized the label ‘man-eater’ as sensationalistic and vilifying, and have pointed out that it is used in campaigns to alter the status of endangered species from strictly protected to ‘killable’ (cf. Margulies). Nonetheless, Quammen argues for the preservation of the problematic term:

¹² Referenced under “Corpse fauna”

¹³ Margulies posits that ‘man-eater’ is the most common descriptor for carnivores that eat humans in India (cf. 151) but it is also a common term in the UK or the US.

Nowadays the term “man-eater” may seem retrograde. Some people who care about large carnivorous animals would like to be rid of it altogether. A case can be made that it’s misleading and sensationalistic [...] The purpose [...] is to market zoological melodrama. Less charitably, we might even call it predator pornography. Despite these objections, I’m unwilling to see “man-eater” erased from our dictionaries [...] It deserves preservation because it labels and commemorates an elemental experience – the experience in which, on rare occasions, members of our species are relegated to the status of edible meat. It’s a reminder of where we have stood, for tens of thousands of years, on the food chain of power and glory. That is, not always and indisputably at the top. (3-5)

This “elemental experience”, the upturning of the perceived ‘natural’ order of things through the reversal of the food chain, may indeed be a powerful element contributing to the fascination that animals that kill and eat humans exert and the term ‘man-eater’ might be a word that succinctly expresses human bewilderment at the thought of their ‘usurpation’. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, ‘man-eater’ is also an informal term for women who “use men to have a series of sexual relationships, but do not love the men”. There are several ways to interpret the metaphor. Allen and Burridge posit that in many figures of speech the sexual and the alimentary are closely connected and point out that often the female sexual organ is compared to a mouth, as for instance in the image of the *vagina dentata*, which does not only combine sex and eating but highlights predatorial, carnivorous and/or cannibalistic aspects (cf. 194). Strong sexual appetite is another possible association, in which case a link is established between animal voraciousness as the source and female sexual desire as the target of the metaphor. A similar source-target combination can be found in the metaphor ‘loan shark’, where animal voraciousness and human greed are co-imagined, arguably also relentlessness, tenacity and viciousness (cf. Zanotto et al., 152). Man-eating animals, or more generally, large predators can also be associated with power and dominance. Scientific publications, for instance, commonly formulate the functions of predators in terms of power and control, in wordings like “dominant species” (cf. Brose et al.), “tigers dominate wolves” (cf. Wallach, 1)” or “trophic regulators” (cf. Ritchie et al, 2013). It is safe to assume that man-eating animals are commonly associated with power and, of course, dangerousness. In this context, it could be argued that one aspect of the man-eater metaphor is male fear of female power. It could also be speculated that the term man-eater denotes social and

behavioral deviancy, or, more precisely, perceived deviancy. In both animal and human context, it could be argued that part of the label's effect is grounded in tacit normative presuppositions, the frustration of which it implies. Regarding female man-eaters, such underlying presuppositions could be the sexist idea that women are (to be) sexually passive and submissive or the old patriarchal desideratum that 'good' women should be 'chaste' and 'modest' and not seductive and promiscuous. In the context of animal man-eaters, underlying anthropocentric premises could be that it is perceived as normal for humans to eat animals but abnormal for animals to eat humans. Humans, it could be argued, don't like the idea that they could be part of a nonhuman animal's regular diet, a reluctance which might contribute to the effort with which explanations are sought for man-eating behavior.

There are many theories which address the question why certain animals kill and eat humans¹⁴. In the case of sharks, for instance, there is the (contested) 'mistaken identity'-thesis (cf. Ritter & Quester), which posits that certain species might erroneously attack people, specifically surfers, because they misinterpret them for pinnipeds, which they are thought to prefer over humans. Nonetheless, sharks are commonly associated with man-eating behavior. In German, for instance, some shark species are, among other terms, referred to as 'Menschenhaie'¹⁵ ('mansharks', my trans.), an anthropocentric term defining them through their purported propensity to eat 'man'¹⁶. The (equally contested) 'infirmity theory', especially in the context of attacks by large terrestrial carnivores such as big cats, suggests that old age and/or physical impairment and the resulting difficulties of hunting agile prey such as ungulates or suidae might be the major reasons why some animals habitually prey on humans, who are comparatively slow and thus easier to take down (cf. Patterson et al., 2003). In the case of the Bengal tigers of the Indian Sundarbans, which cause up to 50 fatalities per year, it is speculated that changing salinity levels of the mangrove swamps influence their propensity to attack people (cf. Das, 1995). Scientific explanation models such as these point out the exceptionality of man-eating behavior and can provide viable

¹⁴ Neither do I intend to nor am I qualified to assess the validity of the mentioned theories but instead wish to exemplify that the criterion of exceptionality plays a relevant role not only in popular but also in scientific discourse on anthropophagic behavior of nonhuman predators.

¹⁵ Cf. „Menschenhai“, DWDS.

¹⁶ I use generic masculine/feminine words without any intention of disregard or discrimination and imagine the value of diversity as a universal freedom independent of grammatical gender.

starting points for the prevention or mitigation of human-animal conflict. They might also help improve the image of large predators, which are often vilified in popular discourse.

Their habit of man-eating, in some cases purported, in others confirmed, has made several individual animals famous or, rather, infamous. One example of such man-eating ‘celebrities’ is the Nile crocodile Gustave, rumored to have killed more than 300 people in Burundi. The animal, in several articles referred to as killer croc or serial killer croc (e.g. Lacey, Potts or McRae), has inspired the 2007 Hollywood horror film *Primeval* and, although real, has been likened by some to famous cryptids such as the Loch Ness monster or Big Foot because of its elusiveness and the legends that surround it (cf. Potts). The Champawat Tiger, another example, is a Bengal tigress suspected to be responsible for over 400 deaths in Nepal and India. She is listed as the most prolific man-eater of all tigers in the *Guinness Book of World Records* (cf. Young), and is featured in the 1948 Hollywood film *Man-Eater of Kumaon* and the 2012 video game *Guild Wars 2*. The movie is based on the bestselling book of the same name written by Jim Corbett¹⁷, who shot her in 1907. Further examples of famous man-eating animals are the so-called Beast of Gévaudan, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five of this study, and the Tsavo Man-Eaters, which will be the central topic of chapter six.

3.3 Moral and legal aspects & the concept of animal alterity

As illustrated above, certain animal species as well as individual specimen have been vilified and characterized as evil, vengeful or vicious creatures in public discourse and popular media. Such anthropomorphic ascriptions imply an ethical or moral dimension and point to the question if animals are or can be considered moral agents. Can they tell right from wrong? Can they be held accountable for their actions? Are the thieving, sadistic killer-seagulls thus called by the British press (cf. chapter 2.1) morally guilty of the crimes these anthropomorphic labels implicitly accuse them of? The latter question might (and probably should) seem absurd, as might (and probably even more so should) seem the accusations made against the animals, the former questions,

¹⁷ Jim Corbett was a British army officer and hunter, mainly operating in India, where he killed several man-eating felids.

however, are integral parts of a century-old, ongoing discourse on the moral status and moral considerability of animals.

Wilson differentiates between indirect, direct but unequal and moral equality theories. According to Wilson, proponents of indirect theories such as Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, Descartes or Kant argue that animals for reasons such as lack of consciousness, lack of autonomy, lack of soul, lack of reason or lack of will “do not warrant moral concern on their own, but may warrant concern only in so far as they are appropriately related to human beings” (Wilson). Direct but unequal theories, proponents of which Wilson does not name, accord moral consideration to animals but deny them “the fuller moral status due to their inability to respect another agent’s rights or display moral reciprocity” (Wilson). Proponents of moral equality, such as philosophers Peter Singer or Tom Regan, oppose human exceptionalism and believe that animals have direct moral status equal to that of humans and argue that the interests of humans and animals should be given equal weight (cf. Wilson).

Peterson proposes that humans and animals, at least mammals, both possess what he calls a ‘moral organ’, the function of which he defines as such: “The function of morality, or the moral organ, is to negotiate the inherent conflict between self and others” (51 pp). He argues that there are two traditional ways of thinking about animals, namely the Cartesian model which objectifies animals as mindless machines and the anthropomorphic model which overhumanizes them. Peterson exemplifies these opposing positions by reference to two central characters of Melville’s *Moby Dick*, which is generally considered as one of the greatest American novels (cf. Lohnes and Cregan-Reid) and which is, perhaps, one of the most famous narratives of literature with an animal in a central antagonistic role. According to Peterson, Ahab, who wants to take revenge on the titular whale who took his leg, “recognizes correctly that Moby Dick is indeed biological kin: an animal with a psychological presence” (20), however is wrong in holding the animal morally responsible. Ismael, on the other hand, according to Peterson, is right in condemning Ahab’s obsession with taking revenge on an animal as an anthropocentric error of judgement, yet is wrong in regarding the whale as a mindless, instinct driven thing (cf. 17-21). Peterson argues for what he calls the ‘third way’, a model of thought that recognizes “both real similarity between human and animal minds, and genuine dissimilarity” (22).

Several scholars posit there is evidence that suggests that the behavior of social animals is governed by moral codes and that certain species, such as dogs or chimpanzees, can act on the basis of moral reasons and can – to limited degree – choose to observe or disregard moral structures (cf. Rowlands, cf. Broom 20-28). Monsó et al., in a survey of empirical studies, state that the evidence gathered until 2018 supports Rowland's argument that some animals are capable of behaving morally (cf. 3). While Rowlands argues that animals should be considered as moral subjects because they can behave on the basis of moral motivations, he deems it probable that they lack "the sorts of concepts and metacognitive capacities to be held morally responsible for their behavior" (Rowlands paraphrased by Monsó et al., 1) and thus cannot be regarded as moral agents.

In a legal context, this differentiation is important in the context of culpability. According to Srivastava (cf. 127-30), most modern legal systems do not treat animals as legal persons and regard them as chattels and/or property devoid of moral agency, and as such do not hold them legally responsible for their actions. In the Treaty of Lisbon, which came into force in 2009, the member states of the EU officially recognized animals as sentient beings¹⁸ whereas before this agreement European law regarded them as chattels. However, European legal systems have not yet acknowledged animals as legal persons and animals still can and often do have the legal status of property (cf. Nurse). Under certain circumstances, human owners can be held legally responsible for the actions of their animal. Section two of the UK Animals Act of 1971, for instance, with several amendments still in effect as of today, states that damages, including injury or death, caused by an animal are a liability of their keeper but section five states exceptions, such as when the damage is "due wholly to the fault of the person suffering it" or when "the damage was suffered by a person who has voluntarily accepted the risk thereof". On a dog-specific information website, the UK government reminds dog owners of their duty to not let a dog be "dangerously out of control", and defines this as follows¹⁹:

¹⁸ Cf. "Animal welfare", European Commission website.

¹⁹ "Controlling your dog in public", UK government website.

Your dog is considered dangerously out of control if it:

- injures someone
- makes someone worried that it might injure them

A court could also decide that your dog is dangerously out of control if either of the following apply:

- it attacks someone's animal
- the owner of an animal thinks they could be injured if they tried to stop your dog attacking their animal

The website lists possible penalties of up to 14 years of imprisonment for owners in case their dog kills a human being. In 1991, in response to a series of dog attacks on children, the UK passed the controversial *Dangerous Dogs Act* (cf. Lynes and Page), still in force today. The breed-specific legislation limits ownership and breeding of certain types of dogs, such as Pit Bull Terriers or Japanese Tosas and, according to Lynes and Page, “has led to the legal killing of hundreds of pet dogs”. Some critics regard the act as a speciesist²⁰ law without any factual justification but instead based on a sensationalist narrative of dangerousness circulated by the media (cf. RSPCA). Most legal systems distinguish between domestic/tame and wild animals, the latter are commonly referred to as *ferae naturae*, a term dating back to Roman law that can be translated as “of a wild nature” (cf. Tomlins, 35).

In historical times, animal attacks were treated quite differently by the law. The Romans, for instance, used animal attacks as a method of execution. The so-called *damnatio ad bestias* [English translation: damnation to beasts] was a form of aggravated death penalty in which human convicts were offered up to wild animals, often big cats or dogs, in circus arenas or cages, who maimed and killed them. According to Coleman (cf. 44-73), the *damnatio ad bestias* was not only used in the context of legal punishment but was staged as a public spectacle in order to display imperial power. In later times, animals themselves could become targets of criminal prosecution. From the middle ages onwards, trials were held in which mostly domestic

²⁰ According to Waldau (cf. 5 and 23-29), the term ‘speciesism’ – in analogy to other discriminating practices such as racism or sexism – was coined in 1970 by Richard Ryder to describe the discrimination of nonhuman animals.

animals suspected of wrongdoing were brought before secular and ecclesiastical courts where they had to stand trial as defendants. Although they did not enjoy legal rights, they were treated as partial legal persons and as such were held culpable for their actions, for which they were often sentenced to death (cf. Srivastava 127-143). Girgen describes the trial and execution of a pig in 1386:

In Falaise (France), an alleged female killer mangled the face and arms of a child, thereby causing the child's death. The defendant was brought before the local tribunal, and after a formal trial she was declared guilty of the crime. True to *lex talionis*, or "eye-for-an-eye" justice, the court sentenced the infanticidal malefactor first to be maimed in her head and upper limbs and then to be hanged. A professional hangman carried out the punishment in the public square near the city hall. However, the case is especially significant because of the fact that the defendant was a pig. (98)

Walter (51) reports that in 1474 a Basel court condemned a rooster to be burned alive "for the heinous and unnatural crime of laying an egg". In 1685, the Wolf of Ansbach, suspected of man-eating, was allegedly sentenced to death (cf. Schild, 67). In the poem *Wildanger*, the 19th century author Franz Ritter von Kobell describes how the wolf was tortured, slain, dressed in a human costume including mask, beard and wig, before he was hung from a gibbet for everyone to see. According to Srivasta (cf. 129-135), animal trials were part of European legal systems until the 18th century but in other parts of the world the practice continued until the early 20th century.

While such anthropomorphic criminalization of animals might nowadays be widely regarded as an absurd practice, zoomorphic attributions are still commonly used to animalize humans in the context of criminality. In her study *Criminals as Animals*, Olsen points out the persistency of the image of criminals, or people who are accused or suspected of crimes or other forms of social deviancy, as beasts. She states:

The 'criminal as animal' is a metaphor through which a person considered deviant is understood in terms of what are seen as the most negative qualities of certain animals. Since the early modern, the most vilifying instances of this trope have employed variations of the word "beast" to denote non-human anima. [...] Simultaneously, "beast" and its cognates took on connotations of the devil and evil and were increasingly used to denigrate what were seen as less worthier humans. (2)

Olsen emphasizes that the practice reifies species divisions and discriminates against both humans and animals in that it negates the humanness of people that behave or are perceived to behave outside of social norms and in that it implies that animals are inherently vicious, instinct-driven brutes (cf. 1). Comparing sensationalist nicknames used by the media such as ‘Duisburger Menschenfresser’²¹ (Duisburg man-eater, trans. by me), referring to a German serial killer and cannibal, or ‘Beast of Birkenhead’²², referring to a Scottish-American serial killer, to labels such as ‘killer croc’ or ‘cannibal seagulls’ (see chapter 2.1 and 2.2), it could be argued that in the public discourse on social deviancy and in that on animal attacks analogous strategies of othering are employed. The labels are basically interchangeable, ostracizing human criminals through animalization and – strikingly similar to the mechanisms at work in animal trials - animal ‘deviants’ through anthropomorphic criminalization.

In his book *The Open: Man and Animal*, Italian philosopher Agamben discusses the man-animal dichotomy, more specifically, the ways in which binary distinctions of the “human” and the “animal” have been manufactured in Western thought and used for purposes of discrimination. He posits that human is created with and against the animal through what he calls the “anthropological machine” (cf. Olliver 1), the mechanisms of which he describes as follows:

If, in the machine of the moderns, the outside is produced through the exclusion of an inside and the inhuman is produced by animalizing the human, here [the machine of earlier times] the inside is obtained through the inclusion of an outside, and the non-man is produced by the humanization of an animal: the man-ape [...] or *Homo ferus*, but also [...] the slave, the barbarian [...] as figures of an animal in human form. (Agamben, 37)

Agamben discusses the animalization of Jews by the Nazis. The Third Reich propaganda labeled them, among other derogatorily used terms, as rats or lice. While the Nazis likened some of their political enemies to vermin, they also animalized themselves, yet, unsurprisingly, as animals with a different cultural image. Sax states that for 20th century fascists such as Hitler or Mussolini, “the state was itself a living

²¹ One of several nicknames used by the German tabloid media for Joachim Kroll, cf. Richter.

²² The British Press used this nickname for Peter Manuel, cf. Hall.

thing, to which individuals must be absolutely subordinate [...] It was, furthermore, a predator, devouring and digesting other countries" (38). She points out the Nazis' "totemistic identification" (38) with wolves. SS soldiers, for instance, were referred to as wolf pack, Hitler, somewhat surprisingly, was known as Little Wolf and Göring characterized the role of Nazi politicians in the Weimar Reichstag as "wolves among sheep" (cf. Sax, 38)

In her introduction to *Thinking through Animal Alterities*, Sune Borkfelt discusses a passage of British writer David Garnett's novel *A Man in the Zoo* (1924), in which the protagonist is called "wild beast" and likened to baboons and bears and states that there is "a long tradition of phrasing otherness along a binary where the 'animal' stands in opposition to the supposedly 'human'" (2016, 1). Like Agamben she views such animalizations in the context of discrimination but she focuses on the cultural construction and ramification of animal alterity. In an essay, she posits that:

Non-human animals are arguably placed in a constant, almost irredeemable state of alterity and are unable to speak for themselves from this othered position, which distinguishes their otherness from that of humans. [...] Generally, one might describe otherness as a focus on difference. [...] We simply tend to place non-human animals in an entirely different category from our human others. (2011, 137-138)

French philosopher Derrida points out how discriminatory mechanisms of categorization ignore the diversity of animals and construct them as 'animality', the binary opposite of 'humanity'. He states:

an immense group, a single and fundamentally homogenous set that one has [presumed] the right, the theoretical or philosophical right, to distinguish and mark as opposite [to humanity] (Derrida, quoted by Acampora, 159)

With his famous question "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" (1974), philosopher Nagel raises attention to other aspects of otherness, although he does not use the term in his paper titled with the question. He states that many, if not all, organisms possess a consciousness and that we could try to imagine their experiences, "if we only knew what they were like" (439) but "cannot form more than a schematic conception of what it *is* like to be them", beyond our ability to conceive and "likely not [...] describable even in the most experiential terms available to us" (439-440). Post-humanist philosophers

Deleuze and Guattari, however, have come forth with a concept of 'becoming-animal'. They state that they "believe in the existence of a very special becomings-animal traversing human beings and sweeping them away, affecting the animal no less than the human" (237). They formulate, among many other enigmatic formulations, that a wolf is "not fundamentally a characteristic or a certain number of characteristics; it is a wolfing" (237). Ritvo (2007) is critical of posthumanist attempts to dissolve the species boundary and, pointing out a paradoxical relation between intention and result, has this to say:

Explicit claims of unity (humans are animals) paradoxically work to reinforce the human-animal boundary they are intended to dissolve. That is to say, such claims incorporate a grudging acknowledgement that this boundary is widely recognized and powerfully influential. Why else would it be continually necessary to deny its validity or remind ourselves of its arbitrariness. [...] The label 'post-humanism' embodies the same wishful thinking as 'late capitalism' does. (119)

4 Animal attacks in mythology, scripture and literature

Given the significant cultural appeal and media echo of certain criminal acts and of animal attacks, it could be speculated that analogous mechanisms govern societal attention (not only but especially) to violent crime and to animal-human predation. Cambridge historian Mccorristine suggests that people might be so interested in stories about serial killers because they are "a way of experiencing death without falling victim to it, of becoming a witness to death and thus exerting some control over it" (Mccorristine, paraphrased by Bond). Arguably analogously, Harvard zoologist Wilson states:

"We are not afraid of predators, we're transfixed by them, prone to weave stories and fables and chatter endlessly about them, because fascination creates preparedness, and preparedness, survival - in a deeply tribal way, we love our monsters". (Wilson, quoted by Colwell)

Dangerous predators and animal attacks certainly are a favorite subject of narrative attention and are featured in the earliest texts of mankind. One of the oldest, if not the first, representations of an animal attack in the history of literature can be found in

tablet VI of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, dating back to ca. 1800²³ BC. In the story told in the tablet, the Heavenly Bull wreaks havoc upon the city of Uruk, killing several hundred men before he is slain by king Gilgamesh and his companion Enkidu. Unfortunately, the lines of the original tablet describing the attack on the men are mutilated and only fragments of the passage have been successfully extracted (cf. Thompson, 35, cf. Black ETCSL). A common thematic frame of animal attack narratives is the conflict of nature vs. culture, which plays an important role in the epic. In the beginning of the story, Enkidu, the wild man, is a hybrid being with more animal than human features, his entire body is covered in hair and he does not know human language. He is created by the gods as the counterpart of Gilgamesh, the proud man of the city, who at this point of the story is a tyrannical ruler. Enkidu grows up with wild animals, which see him as one of their own. He is naked, eats grass and does not possess self-awareness. In the course of the narrative, he undergoes a humanizing/civilizing process and the wild animals he used to live with no longer accept him. He confronts the arrogant and tyrannical Gilgamesh, the ensuing fight ends in a draw. After the altercation, the two become friends and Gilgamesh transforms into a noble and just ruler (cf. Bates 7-8). It could be argued that at this point, the narrative shows nature and culture in a state of equilibrium, counterbalancing each other. Enkidu's ferocity is tamed by the civilizational influences of Gilgamesh and Gilgamesh's haughtiness is humbled by the natural influences of Enkidu. The harmony does not last, however. The more his domestication proceeds, the more Enkidu suffers from being separated from his animal side. Gilgamesh, on the other hand, becomes overambitious and, according to Sharif et al., who interpret the epic through an ecocritical lens, turns into an enemy of nature and commits several acts of ecocide. They view the epic as an environmentally conscious text, including reference to environmental catastrophe (the Great Deluge) and intimations of ecological suicide, namely the killing of the Bull of Heaven, symbol of nature, by (Enkidu and) Gilgamesh, whose name in modern Kurdish means 'horde of buffaloes', who is referred to by the text as 'bull' and who thus figuratively kills himself by killing the animal (cf. 398-403). Finally, they point out that in the epic "Eco-justice or poetic justice is done" (403) in that Gilgamesh is punished for his destruction of

²³ Bates states that oldest literary materials, five Sumerian poems preserved on tablets, date back to the 18th century BC but writes that they probably go back to 2094-2047 BC (cf. 3).

environment by losing his friend (Enkidu dies after the killing of the Bull of Heaven) and by being denied eternal life by nature (Gilgamesh cannot find the immortality plant he seeks).

Millennia after the epic of Gilgamesh was carved into clay, the topoi of human ecological hubris, environmental catastrophe and ecological suicide figure prominently, perhaps more prominently than ever, in literature. Eco-horror is particularly relevant in this context, a term that according to Rust and Soles “has been in use since at least the mid-1990ies to describe works of literature and film in which human characters are attacked by natural forces [...] that have been altered or angered by humans in some way” (510). Rust and Soles suggest a broader definition that does not only encompass ‘revenge of nature’ narratives but includes texts that represent environmental destruction in horrifying ways, texts that blur human/non-human distinctions or texts in which ecological awareness is promoted by use of horror tropes (cf. 509). Many themes and motifs of eco-horror are so universal or archetypal that they can be found in all cultures and all epochs of literature, hence it is difficult, if not futile, to pinpoint its historical origins. Some scholars view the consolidation of eco-horror as a distinct genre as a process following or accompanying the evolution of modern environmentalism (cf. Bourke), which is similarly difficult to date. According to Weyler of Greenpeace, environmental concerns are as old as mankind but “the 18th century witnessed the dawn of modern environmental rights”. He views American nature writers of the 19th century, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, as important inspirators of “generations of environmentalists”. Weyler states that “ecology grew into a full-fledged, global movement with the development of nuclear weapons” but points out that even as late as in 1969 most people had little knowledge about ecology or environmentalism. Nonetheless, the 1960ies/1970ies are by many considered as the era of the so-called ecological turn, a paradigm shift regarding environmental movements, environmental conscious and environmental politics, however, there is doubt among scholars as to the validity of this appraisal (cf. Engels 119). In the last decades, various scholars have come to view mankind’s transformative impact on the planet in the recent centuries or decades as so significant as to constitute a new geological era, for which some of them, such as Paul Crutzen,

suggest the name Anthropocene'²⁴ (cf. Chua and Fair), a terminological reflection of the decisive influence of humans. The coinage has become an influential part of public discourse and has been adopted but also criticized by scholars of various scientific fields, including the humanities (cf. Ellis 2018, cf. Chua and Fair).

Moore posits that the Anthropocene has 'two lives': one as concept of science and another as an idea "permeating the social sciences and public discourse that raises questions about the relationship between humans and the non-human world" (Moore, paraphrased by Chua and Fair). Such questions are also raised by eco-horror, yet from a different angle. Whereas the conceptual term Anthropocene diagnoses human ecological dominance and ecocritically emphasizes human protagonism, many texts of eco-horror confront their human characters with powerful antagonistic forces or nature which challenge or destabilize their position of dominance. A common variant of this concept are animal attack narratives in which entire species or fauna as a whole turn against mankind, such as Frank Schätzing's 2004 bestselling novel *Der Schwarm* (English title: *The Swarm*), one of the most popular works of eco-horror of the last decades (cf. Schaumann and Sullivan, 321). *Der Schwarm* bears conceptual similarities to earlier texts like Stanisław Lem's 1964 *Niezwyciężony* (English title: *The Invincible*), Karel Čapek's 1936 *Válka s mloky* (English title: *The War with the Newts*), or - to name two British works - John Wyndham's 1951 *The Day of the Triffids* and Daphne du Maurier's *The Birds*, the latter will be discussed in detail in chapter seven. Unlike Schätzing's text, none of them have been explicitly classified as eco-horror, however all of them develop the central plot idea that lifeforms initially harmless or perceived as harmless collectively turn hostile against humans and launch devastating assaults against them. In *The Swarm*, deep sea organisms take control over all fauna and start a war against ecologically abusive mankind. Schaumann and Sullivan state that:

the novel is informed not only by network and swarm theories but also by contemporary scientific knowledge [and] astutely popularizes this knowledge and illuminates complex

²⁴ The Cambridge dictionary defines the Anthropocene as "the time from the 18th century until now" but there are several differing suggestions regarding the starting point of the Anthropocene (cf. Ellis 2018, cf. Chua and Fair).

scientific phenomena in an action-packed narrative, thereby warning the public about environmental destruction. (323)

The narrative is indeed action-packed and features several graphic descriptions of animal attacks, whales capsize boats, sharks and jellyfish attack swimmers and worms even destabilize the European coastal shelf. It might be argued that the text's focus on the representation of such animal attacks contributes significantly to its commercial success of the text and albeit the novel certainly points out the possibly catastrophic consequences of environmental destruction and might aim to engender what Bellanca calls "eco-humility" (41), its –and other eco-horror texts'- strategies of doing so bear some similarities to those of black pedagogy (from German: 'Schwarze Pädagogik'), i.e. the focus on violent punishment and intimidation, which Rutschky describes as central aspects of this form of pedagogy. Lysgard et al. argue for the development of new pedagogical strategies in the face of looming ecological catastrophe in the Anthropocene and discuss the possible benefits of what they call 'dark pedagogy', an experimental approach which considers horror and its psychological effects, among many other aspects, as a potentially useful in the context of environmental education. They state:

Confronting that which is otherwise and for the most part hidden away and not talked about enables dark pedagogues to initiate pupils or students in the horrors of the planet and the violent consequences for the biosphere of our cultural activities and societal industriousness. (132)

Heymans argues that the employment of catastrophism by eco-horror might have adverse effects. Instead of creating sympathy with the environment, certain forms of representation could lead to increasing alienation between humans and nature. He states:

Paradoxically enough, eco-horror now aims to demonstrate our rootedness in nature and induce feelings of environmental empathy by representing an overwhelming display of eco-disasters that make nature look even more alien. It thus applies the psychology of alienation as a homeopathic remedy and creates the impression that we are in fact not alienated enough. (20)

Natural disasters, animal attacks and, arguably, dark pedagogy figure prominently in the Bible. Animals are frequently used in threats and as a form of punishment, such as

in Exodus, where five of the then plagues God²⁵ sends against the Egyptians are animal-related (cf. Ex. 7-11), or in Leviticus, where God warns the Israelites of the consequences of disobedience:

And I will let loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you few in number, so that your roads shall be deserted. (Lev. 26.21)

The last of the Horsemen of the Apocalypse, Death, in Revelation 6 is followed by “wild beasts of the earth” (Rev. 6.7). In 2 Kings the prophet Elisha curses children who taunt him as ‘baldhead’ and “two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the boys” (2 Kgs. 2.23).

With 119 explicit mentions of the word, lions are among the most frequently cited animals in the bible. A famous lion-related passage, in which they are not used figuratively but appear as actual animals, is found in the Book of Daniel (Dan. 6), where -upon divine intervention- the large felids refrain from eating Daniel, who has been sentenced to death sentence in the lions’ den following false allegations by a rival. Non-predation is followed by ‘hyperpredation’:

And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces. (Dan. 6.24)

The bible uses lions’ predatory selectiveness on several other occasions to demonstrate how God protects those that are to his liking and how he punishes those that are not (cf. Sam. 17.37, 1 Kgs, 2 Kgs). In several stories, the killing of dangerous animals is used as a show of force to human enemies, such as in 1 Samuel, where David, one of the most prominent biblical heroes, tells of his victorious fight against bears and lions:

[...] And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, ³⁵ I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me,

²⁵ This study uses the English Standard Version in which the word God is capitalized, therefore this paper capitalizes the word as well when quoting from or referring to the bible.

I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them (1 Sam. 17.34-36)

Intimidating or awe-inspiring animals are also employed as cathartic instruments. In, perhaps, one of the most popular stories of the bible, Jonah, having been thrown overboard by sailors, is swallowed by a giant fish²⁶. After three days in the belly of the fish, he starts to pray to God, whom preceding the animal 'attack' he had tried to flee, "and the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land" (Jon. 2.10). The Leviathan is another giant sea creature featured in the bible. It is mentioned in five passages and is described as either a multiheaded sea serpent (Ps. 74.14) or "the dragon that is in the sea" (Is 27.1). Its zoological identity has been the subject of speculation, some have suggested it might be a crocodile, a fish, a whale or a snake (cf. Tralau,1), although symbolical interpretations, for instance viewing it as a symbol of god's power of creation or a symbol of the devil, are more common (cf. Tralau). In his book 1651 *Leviathan* English philosopher Hobbes used it as symbol of order and the regulatory power of the absolutist state and in his later work *Behemoth* (1668), he antithetically employed Leviathan's biblical pendant, the enigmatic land creature Behemoth, as a symbol of unregulated violence and (civil) war (cf. Tralau). In a similar context, in the dedication of *De Cive* (1642), one of his main works, he drew upon Plautus adage "*Lupus est homo homini, non homo*" (English transl. by me.: Man is a wolf to man), perhaps one of the most famous animal predation-themed proverbs, to describe the violent tribalist tendencies human societies develop when they are not governed by a powerful sovereign or authority (cf. Hespe, 1-2), which he would later symbolically equate with the Leviathan. Intertextual references to both Leviathan and the book of Jonah (e.g. chapter 8, Father Mapple's address to the sailors), among many other biblical allusions or quotations (cf. Young 1981, 388), can be found in Melville's *Moby Dick*. Whales are frequently referred to as leviathans, in one passage, for instance, a mother whale is called "Madame Leviathan" (372), in another, Ahab, the captain of the whaleboat is called "a great Lord of Leviathans" (194). In reference to Melville and the whale, biologists have named a particularly large, extinct species of

²⁶ Although the story is commonly known as *Jonah and the Whale*, the NEV does not mention a whale but speaks of a giant (Jon 2.10) or great (Matt. 12.40) fish.

sperm whales *Livyatan melvillei* (cf. Fang). The book is named after Mocha Dick, a sperm whale that lived in the 19th century and is rumored to not only have survived 100 skirmishes with whalers but to have destroyed twenty whaling ships (cf. Eschner). Armstrong points out several aspects of non-human agency, such as volition or “deliberate design to do mischief” (116), in the text’s representation of the titular whale. He states:

precisely those aspects of agency shown by the sperm whale which caused contemporary writers such anxiety, and which provide the main source of the uncanny terror surrounding Moby Dick; the tendency to make ‘willful, deliberate, and even judicious attempts’ against human pursuers (116).

The question if animals can be agents is discussed by many scholars of the burgeoning field of animal studies. There are no universally accepted definitions of what constitutes animal agency and the concepts that have been proposed are as complex and contested (cf. Steward) as are those of animal morality. Carter and Charles argue that human-other animal interactions “might be understood in terms of action, agency and resistance” (322) and suggest a distinction between primary and corporate agency. They view animals capable of exercising the former but not the latter and state:

Animals are therefore agents; they act and their actions have consequences, they also resist conditions which they do not like and, in some circumstances, are able to change the conditions of their agency. (322)

Based on these premises, Mocha Dick could be viewed as an animal agent, even a historical agent, given that his historical fame is a consequence of his own, arguably willful actions of resistance or, perhaps, also aggression. Rees states:

a profound barrier to recognising the historical agency of socially and economically disempowered groups has come from the resulting assumption that ‘agent’ is synonymous with rationality, and the freedom to choose. [...] Taking animal agency seriously requires us to challenge the continuing presumption that agency is dependent on self-consciousness – indeed, even to question whether it can be located within an individual mind.

Armstrong point outs that in *Moby Dick* and other works with a focus on whaling not only aspects of individual animal agency can be identified but also collective, arguably,

cultural responses to human predation are discernable, such as increased hostility of the animals and the forming of extensive herds, described in Melville's text as "armies" (cf. Melville, 437 and Armstrong, 126). He states:

Ishmael [...] repeats his hypothesis that [...] sperm whales are now frequently met with in extensive herd...as if numerous nations of them had sworn solemn league and covenant for mutual assistance. [...] Melville identifies a material instance of the interchange between culture and nature [...] Melville repeats the notion [...] a capacity to learn and pass on that learning which cannot be reduced to instinct [...] or in other words, a culture. (126)

Armstrong posits that ascriptions to whales of human societal structures such as armies, armadas, leagues and covenants were and still are scorned as anthropomorphic misinterpretations by positivist science (cf. 126) and refers to Latour, who regards the prohibition on anthropomorphism as a regulatory mechanism assuring the strict separation between human and non-human ontologies (Latour paraphrased by Armstrong, 126). Daston and Mitman (cf. 2) view anthropomorphism not only as the cultural practice of depicting animals with human character or cultural traits but as the actual belief that animals and humans share these traits. De Waal uses the term Anthropodenial, his own coinage, in response to the tabooification of anthropomorphic thought about animals by parts of the scientific community and states that "it [Anthropodenial] is a blindness to the human-like characteristics of animals, or the animal-like characteristics of ourselves" (1999, 258). De Waal supports an what he calls animalcentric, heuristic anthropomorphism (270), but also views some aspects of lay anthropomorphisms as useful. He mentions the ubiquity anthropomorphism in popular culture, e.g. Kindchenschema-anthropomorphisms in Disney films like Bambi, a practice which he critically refers to as "Bambification" (260), or the use of anthropomorphism in satire and describes the most common form of anthropomorphism as "the kind that naively attributes feelings and thoughts to animals based on insufficient information or wishful thinking" (260) and calls these instances of anthropomorphism as anthropocentric, described by the Cambridge dictionary as "considering humans and their existence as the most important and central fact in the universe". He argues, however, that "[anthropocentric anthropomorphism] serves to firmly plant the idea that we are animals" (261) and states that animal metaphors and

other forms of anthropomorphism are attempts to make sense of the world, whereas a rigorous rejection of anthropomorphism by positivist science bears the risk of marginalizing the continuities between humans and animals and fortifying an artificial intellectual barrier. Anthropomorphic representation is a common practice in many literary genres. Perhaps one of the most famous anthropomorphically portrayed predators of British literature is found in Kipling's *Jungle Book* (1894). Shere-Khan is a vengeful, crippled Bengal tiger who is obsessed with hunting humans, arguably a literary reflection of infirmity theories explaining animal-human predation, as mentioned in chapter 3.2. He is unsuccessful in hunting them, however, which frustrates him and he swears to kill the human child Mowgli, the human protagonist of the story. The animal characters in the *Jungle Book* bear little resemblance to actual animals and are commonly viewed as allegorical, Shere Khan, for instance, has been interpreted as a symbol of "anarchic nativism in conflict with orderly colonialism" whose "message consists of anti-colonial rhetoric combining notions of man-eating and racial difference to colonial authority" (Nyman, quoted by Thieme, 141). Anarchy, or more generally, politics and allegory are central aspects of Orwell's *Animal Farm*, a narrative in which animal characters act as political predators, especially the pigs Old Major, Napoleon and Snowball, which have been interpreted as allegories of Marx/Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky (cf. Masofa). Animal attacks in a political context are also featured in Orwell's *1984* (1949), where in chapter 5 the main character, Winston Smith, is tortured by the government with a cage of hungry rats that is placed next to his face:

The rat,' said O'Brien, still addressing his invisible audience, 'although a rodent, is carnivorous. You are aware of that. You will have heard of the things that happen in the poor quarters of this town. In some streets a woman dare not leave her baby alone in the house, even for five minutes. The rats are certain to attack it. Within quite a small time they will strip it to the bones. They also attack sick or dying people. They show astonishing intelligence in knowing when a human being is helpless. [...] You understand the construction of this cage. The mask will fit over your head, leaving no exit. When I press this other lever, the door of the cage will slide up. These starving brutes will shoot out of it like bullets. Have you ever seen a rat leap through the air? They will leap on to your face and bore straight into it. Sometimes they attack the eyes first. Sometimes they burrow through the cheeks and devour the tongue. (360-361)

Rats as a torture instrument are also featured in Edgar Allan Poe's story *The Pit and the Pendulum* (1842) and Octave Mirbeau's novel *The Torture Garden* (1899) and is

discussed in Freud's 1909 case study of the neurotic 'Rattenmann' (transl.: Rat Man). Unfortunately, rat torture is not an invention of fiction but has been used by various regimes throughout history, for instance during Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile (cf. Simmons, 12). Welsh poet William W. Davies wrote a poem about a rat attack, titled *The Rat* (1927), which according to Taylor, is intertextually referenced in 1984, the text of the poem goes like this:

That woman there is almost dead,
Her feet and hands like heavy lead;
Her cat's gone out for his delight,
He will not come home again this night.

Her husband in a pothouse drinks,
Her daughter at a soldier winks;
Her son is at his sweetest game,
Teasing the cobbler old and lame.

Now with these teeth that powdered stones,
I'll pick out all of her cheek-bones;
When husband, son and daughter come,
They'll soon see who was left at home. (quoted in Taylor)

Orwell's rat torture scene bears similarities to the last stanza, also the theme of human vulnerability is central to both texts. A marked difference, however, is the anthropomorphic representation of the animal's thoughts and the focus on its intelligence. Intelligent rats are the main antagonists of James Herbert's 1974 novel *The Rats*, similar to the collective animal assault narratives mentioned above, where London's rats turn hostile and attack and kill people, especially, but not only, those living in less affluent areas. According to Campbell, the novel was a great commercial success but was met with harsh criticism for being too graphic and for its implicit criticism of the neglect of London's suburbs (cf. Campbell, paraphrased by Joshi, 272-273), a social commentary not dissimilar to that of Davies' poem. Irish author Stephen Gilbert's 1968 novel *Ratman's Notebooks* also features attacks of intelligent rats but in a decidedly different context. The book is about a man who befriends a colony of rats and trains them to do things to for him and later uses them for robberies and other crimes. Socrates, an obedient rat disciple favored by the human protagonist and Ben, a rebellious rodent disliked by him, are the main animal characters of the text. When

Socrates is killed, the man is forced to use Ben for his criminal purposes, including murder, but Ben grows increasingly hostile. The situation eventually escalates and the rats, under Ben's leadership, turn against their former 'master'. The text ends with the animals chewing at a door, behind which the man has locked himself, an obvious reference to du Maurier's *The Birds*, which will be discussed in chapter seven. The central story idea of animals being used for human crimes bears some similarities to A. C. Doyle's Sherlock Holmes novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902), in which a human villain sics a manipulated dog on human characters. *Ratman's Noteboook*, however, is not a detective story and the psychological aspects of the human-animal relationship as well as animal agency and resistance play an important role, as do the themes of anthropogenic disruption and self-inflicted catastrophe, which, as has been shown, also figure prominently in works of eco-horror. While rats are frequently found in English animal attack narratives set in Great Britain, the same does not appear to be the case with large predators, at least with such that are not merely symbols, metaphors or allegories but actual animals. During the research for this study, few non-allegorical representations of attacks by dangerous, potentially man-eating animals such as sharks, whales, bears or wolves staged in England were found. Even more so, it proved surprisingly difficult to find animal attack narratives featuring such animals in canonical²⁷ texts of British literature even without the premise of this setting. Of course, this might be attributable to various insufficiencies regarding the research, yet a brief venture into the corpus of American literature yielded markedly different results and stories about or featuring wolf, whale, shark or bear attacks were rather quickly found, e.g. in the works of Poe, Melville or Jack London, also non-canonical works of this kind were easier to find, such as those of Peter Benchley, Michael Crichton or James Patterson. This might have to do with cultural differences or preferences but, perhaps, also with ecological ones. Whereas Britain's fauna has been deprived of all large predators since the middle ages (cf. chapter 5), America's wildlife has not. As of yet, there are still several potentially dangerous predator species in the US, such as white sharks, mountain lions, bears, alligators or wolves. The purported sighting of a

²⁷ The concept of canon is certainly not undisputed. In the above context, it is by no means meant as a term judging literary quality. Instead, it is used to refer to works of cultural notoriety or works that have achieved the status of classics, which most people of a culture know or have at least heard of.

white shark in British waters has caused a media hysteria (cf. Wharton), even when sharks are spotted near the Balearic Islands, a popular holiday destination for Brits, the British press, at least the tabloid section, reacts with alarmist headlines (cf. Culbertson). Rats or birds, on the other hand, are ubiquitous in Britain and in the case of the rodents, their cultural echo might also have to do with common phobias and, perhaps, their historical image as bringers of the plague. All of this is mere speculation, however, and many British texts featuring attacks of large predators were most likely not noticed during research. A bear attack, for instance, can be found in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (1623), including the stage direction "Exit pursued by a Beare" (3.3. between line 64-65), according to Biggins (3) the most notorious in the whole of Shakespeare. There are debates regarding the dramatic intent and purpose of the direction (cf. Biggins), from a pragmatic perspective it might be argued that it spares directors and actors the challenge of having to enact a bear mauling by sending the animal and Antigonus, the character it pursues, off the stage, although the problem of staging the bear remains, for which throughout the centuries directors and dramaturgs have found various creative solutions (cf. Davis). In the play, the pursuit scene is followed by dialogue of shepherds in which one of them describes Antigonus' death in detail:

SHEPHERD'S SON

[...]to see how the bear tore out his
shoulder-bone; how he cried to me for help and said
his name was Antigonus, a nobleman. (3.3. 99-101)

[...]

Now, now: I have not winked since I saw these
sights: the men are not yet cold under water, nor
the bear half dined on the gentleman: he's at it
now. (3.3 109-112)

[...]

I'll go see
if the bear be gone from the gentleman and how much
he hath eaten: they are never curst but when they
are hungry. (3.3 134-137)

The above lines are only a short excerpt from the dialogue of the side characters. The shepherd's son first graphically describes how Antigonus is fatally injured by the bear

and then details how the animal devours him. It might be speculated that the dialogue serves the purpose of indirectly delivering to the audience what they are not shown on the stage to compensate them for the omission of material spectacle, yet while the bear's acts of violence and man-eating may be at its center, it also includes an ethological caveat. The shepherd's son posits that bears "are never curst but when they are hungry", thus emphasizes that the species is not inherently vicious and only kills and eats because of hunger. Fitzpatrick speculates that the scene might express sympathy for bears, which in Shakespeare's time, as will be discussed in chapter 5, were used, or rather, abused in the context of blood sport. She states:

There was a great deal of sympathy for the bears who suffered in London's bear-baiting rings and perhaps Shakespeare too felt pity for the creatures, a sympathy demonstrated in *The Winter's Tale* by having the bear hunt and eat the man rather than the other way around. (61)

Representations of predators and animal attacks, although arguably with a focus on spectacle and danger rather than sympathy, can be found in many works of adventure fiction. It has been stated above that difficulties were encountered in the search for representative animal attack narratives featuring large predators in certain segments of British literature, however they were not difficult to find in British adventure fiction. In their study on the cultural representation of sharks, for instance, Westbrook et al. mention several British authors who have portrayed sharks and shark attacks, mostly in texts set in exotic locations, such as George Alexander Stevens in *The French Flogged* (1767), Richard Cumberland in *Imposters* (1789) or R.M. Ballantyne in *The Coral Island* (1858), which, according to Marsh (cf. 246-250), was considered a classic in the early 20th century and is said to have influenced Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1882), which later surpassed it in fame (cf. Brantlinger, 33). In empire fiction (cf. Mangum 165) and in the thematically related colonial hunting narratives and accounts, both of which to be discussed in chapter 6, large predators play an important role. Several scholars have interpreted the phenomenon of big cat hunting and the narratives surrounding it in the context of colonialism and imperialism. Storey states:

To this day, people associate lion and tiger hunting vividly with Europe's experience in Africa and Asia. Symbolic of an era when, as Kipling put it, the colonial powers were to

“take up the White Man’s burden”, to rule “wild”, “new-caught, sullen peoples, Half-devil and half child” the imagery of lion and tiger hunting has had remarkable staying power. (135)

The lion is the national emblem of Great Britain and widely recognized as a symbol of power (cf. Strawn), as is the tiger, national animal, yet not emblem²⁸, of India. Both animals are, of course, also dangerous predators and hunting and killing them could be orchestrated as a show of force, as, for instance, the rulers of the Mughal empire had done in tiger hunts before they were succeeded by the British who, according to Sramek, “sought to emulate them, “presuming themselves the ‘New Mughals’”, that had to “outdo various regional rulers [...] who also employed tigers as powerful symbols of their rule” (659). Sramek posits that tiger hunting was an important element in the construction of British imperial and masculine identities:

Precisely because tigers were dangerous and powerful beasts, tiger hunting represented a struggle with fearsome nature to be resolutely faced “like a Briton” [...] Only by successfully vanquishing tigers would Britons prove their manliness and their fitness to rule over Indians. (659)

Heracles, perhaps one of the most popular heroes of Greek mythology, kills several dangerous animals or animal-like creatures. Already as an infant, he strangles two snakes. Of the Twelve Labors, he takes upon himself to atone for his sins, nine are animal-related, including man-eating horses, man-eating birds, a man-eating lion and a marauding boar. In the course of his adventures he kills several animals or monsters that are named after the places which they terrorize, such as the Nemean Lion, the Lion of Cithaeron or the Lernaean Hydra (cf. Leis and Sourek). Millenia later, the killing of similarly labeled ‘monsters’ is the central topic of British hunting narratives or accounts. In his commercially successful books (cf. Booth, 230) *Man-eaters of Kumaon* (1944) and *The Man-Eating Leopard of Rudraprayag* (1948), recounting his hunting experiences in India and Nepal, Jim Corbett tells about his killing of man-eating or purportedly man-eating big cats such as the Champawat Man-eater, the Chowgarh tigers, the Bachelor of Powalgarh or the Leopard of Rudraprayag. Several other British

²⁸ The three-headed lion, going back to the reign of Ashoka, is the national emblem of India since 1950 (cf. references: “State emblem”).

big game hunters wrote accounts of their exploits and achieved fame, such as G.H. Anderson, J.A. Hunter or the already mentioned John Henry Patterson (cf. Herne). All of the above is, of course, but a brief foray into the huge corpus of texts featuring representations of animal-human predation or animal attacks and there are many other analytical aspects that could be discussed. The fascination with dangerous animals transcends all cultures and all literary epochs as does human fear of them. Malamud, commenting on animals in the horror genre, states:

We are afraid of a lot of animals: mosquitoes who carry West Nile virus, sharks who eat us when we are on vacation, pit bulls, deer ticks, bears, bats, spiders, rats, killer bees, mad cows, and on and on. (26)

He posits, however, that “these fears could lead to improved relationships with animals” (26). Mary Allen states that animals have served literature well (3). Sharing Malamud’s and Allen’s appraisals, the following analysis strives to examine the representation of animal-human predation and the human-animal relationship in the texts *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Man-eaters of Tsavo* and *The Birds* with attention to the question how animals are served by them.

5 Robinson Crusoe

Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* is in little need of introduction. Coleridge’s universal man, Marx’s *homo oeconomicus* or Joyce’s prototypical colonialist are but a few critical soubriquets to illustrate the universality of the text. Contender for the first English novel proper (cf. Watt 104) and one of the few works of art to lend its title to a genre, *Crusoe* is a text of archetypal quality and a great literary biotope for the study of human-animal relationships. The novel is densely populated by animals and shows its human characters in all kinds of interactions with them, ranging from safari-style hunting, farming, pet keeping to quasi-military conflict. Although a good deal of the text is devoted to domestication, animals are allowed to roam outside the confines of allegory or parody, most of them are brutes not Brits and don’t wear shirts or smoke pipes but instead are wild creatures with a life of their own, which frequently puts them at odds with the human elements of the fictional ecosystem they inhabit. The following analysis

examines this conflict within *Crusoe's* literary universe by taking a close look at the representation of hostile interspecies interactions and seeks to explore the struggle as a transgressive phenomenon beyond teeth, claws and gunpowder to find out what is at stake when the text's humans and animals go at each other.

5.1 Cultural and historical context

By 1719, the year *Robinson Crusoe* was first published, all potentially dangerous non-human predators had either long vanished from the British Isles or were at the edge of extinction. Curry-Lindahl (74) claims that the last brown bears of Britain probably died out during the 10th and 11th century, archaeological findings suggest the species might have been gone extinct as early as 594 A.D. (cf. Briggs). According to Long (259), the last populations of wild wolves in England were most likely hunted down during the reign of Henry VII (1485-1509), followed by the extinction of the species in Scotland (1743) and Ireland (1760). Even the wild boar, a non-predatory animal capable of seriously injuring or even hurting humans when disturbed, had disappeared from the local ecosystem before 1700. Thus, Defoe wrote his novel in a country, the wildlife of which had been depleted to a point where the rat flea, then unidentified as transmitter of the plague virus, and arguably the dog posed the greatest animal threat to humans. In contrast to the consequent declawing of the natural fauna, brutal animal 'sports' such as staged hunts, bear-baiting (using captive bears), cockfighting, dogfighting or even human-baiting remained popular forms of entertainment well into the 19th century²⁹. Non-native animals were exhibited in menageries, where European royalty engaged in the prestigious keeping -and showing- of exotic fauna. The London Tower Menagerie, dating back to 1204, housed one of Europe's biggest collections of captive animals, including elephants, bears and a variety of large felids. Abusive spectacles such as lion baiting were staged for the entertainment of the aristocracy, who could watch animal fights from elevated viewing platforms. Similar practices continued long after the menagerie had been opened to the public by Elizabeth I. Blunt (15-17)

²⁹ In his extensive monography on the violent blood 'sport' of dog fighting, Homan lists a wealth of historical records. Several show fights between humans and mostly muzzled dogs are documented, with the 1892 case of James Oxley showing that human 'combatants' did not always emerge as victors (see 101-104).

documents that in the 18th century, commoners could pay a moderate fee to see live cats and dogs being fed to the lions.

Safety policies were lax and prodding and touching the animals on display was not uncommon, as is documented in the curious case of Mary Jenkinson, who in 1686 became the first recorded victim of a (provoked) fatal lion attack on English soil:

[...] one of the Lyons (being the Greatest there) putting out his Paw, she [Mary] was so venturous as to stroak him as she used to do, but he suddenly caught her by the middle of the Arm with his Claws and mouth, and most miserably tore her flesh from the Bone before he could be unloosed [...]whereupon Chirurgeons [...] thought it necessary for the preservation of her Life, to cut off her Arm, but she Died not many Hours after.”³⁰

Travelling menageries, catering to the less affluent part of the population, brought the sensation of exotic animals from urban centers to the countryside. Hannah Twynnoy, a Malmesbury barmaid, was allegedly killed by a tiger brought along by a show troupe that had set up shop in her village³¹.

Apart from being objects of popular spectacle, animals drew much attention from the sciences. Following the anthropocentric centuries of humanism, the era of Enlightenment brought a change of perspective that lead to a rekindled interest in the natural world and engendered significant methodological innovations in its study. In the field of medicine, English physician William Harvey develops the first comprehensive model of the circulation of blood. Building on Galen’s medicinal work and Aristotle’s notion about the essential similarity of all animals (see Guerrini 120-122), Harvey’s groundbreaking studies are based on systematic vivisection and other forms of animal experimentation.

Philosopher René Descartes compares animals to automata, using the famous metaphor of the *bête machine* (cf. Senior 39), and defines the capacity of rational thought as the essential feature separating humans from non-human animals. The Cartesian model rejects the idea of animal-human continuity in favor of human exceptionalism and denies animals not only mind but also feeling. Defoe uses the machine metaphor in a comment on the case of Peter, called the “Wild Boy”, a feral

³⁰ Transcription of historical newssheet in *Catalogue of English Broad-sides*, 401.

³¹ Source: BBC “Memorial for tiger death woman”, including picture of gravestone.

child that was found in the woods and became subject of public interest. Defoe (quoted in Kete 23) describes the boy as “a human in bestial form, a human-machine [...] lacking the essential guarantee of the human: that is, the possession of a soul.” While the devout Presbyterian author foregrounds the spiritual level, his formulation is analogous to the Cartesian model. Descartes (quoted in Senior 39) himself finds the soul absent in animals and concludes that therefore they can only sense but not experience pain or pleasure the way humans do, for “it is the soul that feels and not the body”.

The soul as a hallmark of human exceptionality is a concept firmly rooted in Judeo-Christian dogma, which imagines “human nature as a conflict between the animal passions of the mortal body and the divine aspirations of the immortal soul” (Armstrong 6). An archetypal illustration of this struggle is the story of Eve and the serpent, one of the world’s oldest animal ‘attack’ stories and one of many animal-associated templates the bible provides for moral and metaphysical thought. While scripture certainly held a persistent influence over the way people thought not only about but *with* animals and aligned with Cartesian philosophy in entrenching the human-animal divide, Enlightenment ideas brought forth many endeavors directed in the opposite direction. Thomas (33-34) points out that the French philosopher’s mechanistic animal paradigm - contrary to popular historical appraisal of its impact - was anything but a bestseller within the philosophical community and was met with skepticism or outright rejection by many of Descartes’ contemporaries. The strongest objection came from English thinkers, the majority of which refuted the French philosopher’s ideas. John Locke insists that animals have feelings and are capable of experiencing pain, yet his objections against animal cruelty are mainly based upon the anthropocentric premise that unnecessary violence visited on animals by humans would “by degrees, harden their minds even towards men” (116, pp 180-1). Rousseau writes about animals as “his fellow-creatures” (qutd. in DeMello 381) and posits that the difference between humans and animals might be one of degree rather than kind. Observing animals’ capacity to experience intense suffering, he advocates their entitlement to basic rights and contemplates the importance of pity and empathy as governing principles for the philosophical as well as the worldly treatment of non-human beings.

The expanding field of natural history takes great interest in the observation of nature and endeavors to investigate phenomena of the social world through a naturalist lens, “to establish not only the expertise of the naturalists over the natural, but also the dominance of the natural over the social”, as Spary (281-282) notes. Thomas (41) views Enlightenment thinking about animals as central for the reimagining of humanity, for which - in his eyes - the concept of ‘animality’ served as a companion term and claims that it “was as a comment on *human nature* that the concept of ‘animality’ was devised.”

In the literary domain, Jonathan Swift joins this discourse as a satirical commentator when he turns the tables in *Gulliver’s Travels*, in which the horse-like Houyhnhnms are the *animal rationale*, while the humanoid Yahoos are the “embodiment of irrational, carnal appetite”. (Armstrong, 8) – a literary ‘attack’ of sorts on contemporary notions of human exceptionalism, a carnivalesque penetration of the species boundary and a deft animal comment on human society.

Despite the diversity of developments regarding the relationship between humans and animals, Wolloch (14) - looking at early modernism from an animal rights advocate’s position - diagnoses a “deeply rooted anthropocentric bias” of the era that effectively hampered the development of “pro-animal sentiments or beliefs until the end of the eighteenth century”. Huggan and Tiffin (134) claim, that “the Enlightenment trajectory of humanist essentialism demanded the repression of the animal and animalistic in all its latent and recandescent forms.” Whereas these may be contestable generalizations, coming from a 21st century environmentalist angle, they nonetheless provide important benchmarks for the analysis of Defoe’s work as not only a product or reflection but potentially a comment on the animal question(s) of Enlightenment and beyond, especially when looking at the various ways it represents human-animal conflict.

5.2 Cannibalism and animalism

Although the narrative is densely populated by animals, it takes some time before the novel’s English hero Robinson Crusoe, protagonist and narrator of the story, is introduced to the rich fauna of the literary habitat. Having weathered tempestuous sea storms, survived a pirate raid and escaped from Barbary slavery, Crusoe is well

acquainted with danger. Drifting along the shore of an unspecified part of West Africa on a small boat with Xury, his Morisco fellow-escapee, Crusoe addresses the need to procure freshwater, which requires the men to leave the relative safety of their boat. He expects the land to be unsafe and conducts a risk analysis: “we could ne’er once go on shoar but we should be devour’d by savage Beasts, or more merciless Savages of humane kind” (27). This marks the first point in the novel where danger, if only on a hypothetical level, is specifically associated with animals. Whereas the narrative chooses to exhibit the archetypal conflicts *man against (inanimate) nature* and *man against man* successively (first storm, then pirate raid), it introduces the motif of animal threat parallelly to that of human threat.

‘Savages’, for Crusoe interchangeable with ‘cannibals’ (see Olson 177), is used to designate violent specimens across the species. The attribute ‘merciless’ indicates a moral dimension on which Crusoe contraposes human and animal predatory behavior. An implicit ethical verdict is rendered and humans are found to be the guiltier part. Anthropophagy, drastically expressed in the image of ‘devouring’, is designated as a less acceptable habit or practice in humans than in animals. Ironically, this is realized via a transspecies simile that animalizes man-eating humans as *human animals* in both racist and speciesist perversion of the terms. Non-European humans, as in the imaginary African cannibals thought to be lurking ashore, are othered by means of comparison to animals, which are implicitly presented as beings of lesser value than humans. As the *tertium comparationis*, observance of the taboo of anthropophagy functions as the measure of humanness. The punishment for breaking this taboo is relegation below the status of man-eating animals.

A myopic reading focusing solely on the deprecatory quality of *Crusoe*’s oftentimes complex man-beast comparisons, however, does not do the text justice. Defoe’s narrator, while certainly in emphatic approval of Judeo-Christian dogma and in explicit disapproval of cannibalism, does not consistently use ascriptions of anthropophagy to establish hegemonic claims of (colonial) moral superiority³². African cannibalism is not confirmed to be a real phenomenon within the diegesis, to the contrary, initially feared

³² Aren’s text “The Man-Eating Myth” posits cannibalism to be a strategically employed cultural myth, a claim disputed by Ellis (see 46) in his in-depth analysis of the representation of cannibalism in *Robinson Crusoe*.

by Crusoe, the natives on the shore become his trade partners and not the digestors of his roasted intestines. Later, after the protagonist's shipwreck in the Caribbean, the narrative introduces intradiegetically real cannibals, yet has the narrator discuss their practice of anthropophagy in an arguably paternalistic, yet expressly non-judgmental way, comparing it to the ethically unquestioned practice of eating animals: "They think it no more a Crime to kill a Captive taken in War, than we do to kill an Ox; nor to eat humane Flesh, than we do to eat Mutton." (202)

In the same contemplative sequence, the genocidal crimes of the Spanish colonial conquerors are compared to the cultural practices of the local 'savages' with the latter being found less reproachable. The exculpation of the 'cannibals', however, carries a strong subtext of English imperialist desire, declaring the locals as potentially applicable for a Christian reeducation program, later in the narrative exemplarily exercised on the character of Friday, while at the same time painting the colonial competition as negatively as possible.

5.3 Zoomorphism & criminality

Regarding the image of animals, as has been stated, the narrative employs the compositional principle of interweaving animal and human danger and violence throughout the entire text and in doing so repeatedly implies humans might be equally, if not more dangerous than animals, such as in the zoomorphic metaphor of "two-legged wolves" (345), circumscribing brigands against whom Crusoe and his companions are emphatically warned on their way across the Pyrenees. Semantically similar to the universally known Latin adage *homo homini lupus*, which according to ethologist Frans de Waal (2009, 3) does the species great injustice by misrepresenting its highly gregarious and cooperative social ways, the trope is formally more radical in that it synecdochally crosses the species boundary. The hybrid being is not a mythical lycanthrope, however, but a criminal 'humanimal', debased in both material and immaterial dimension. In the logic of the image, bipedality in contrast to animal-associated quadrupedality, is highlighted as the focal quality of humanness. Read from a 21st century vantage point and against the backdrop of the intelligence-based Cartesian distinction, it almost reads like a Darwinist pun on the arrogations of human

exceptionalism when humans are differentiated from animals through such a profane corporeal criterion as the number of legs.

The immaterial half of the 'humanimal' is defined by 'wolfness', which signifies the focal moral quality of the metaphor's creature. Following the biblical template or that of fables and similar literary genres, a moral statement about humans is made using non-humans as symbolical vehicle. From a less hyperopic analytical perspective, the metaphor is not a particularly innovative construct but a common figure of speech with a long tradition. Ancient Pahlavi texts speak of two-legged wolves in reference to idolaters (see West 2013:151), Classical Greek writer Aeschylus uses transspecies imagery like 'two-legged snakes' or 'two-legged lions' to characterize human referents and to convey moral statements about them (see West 2007: 100).

Defoe's narrator employs the trope in a similar way and highlights the dangerousness and recklessness of road brigands by making them wolves, reciprocally wolves are considered criminals. Quite in contrast to the ambivalence of cultural ascriptions to *canis lupus*, the image is perfectly unambiguous in what it implies about the animals: wolves are vicious and by applying a human moral standard on them, they become delinquents. In her extensive analysis of the metaphorical amalgamation of criminality and animality, Olson analyses Crusoe's consequent equalization of the two as a strategic element of an imperialist ideology of subjugation:

For Crusoe, 'savages' like criminals and other dangerous animals need to be shot, hanged or tamed. The excuse provided for this violence is that these 'creatures' will kill Crusoe unless he destroys them. [...] the fear of becoming object of the feast provides the ideological legitimacy for their annihilation. [...] The right to subjugation [...] is part of a larger imperial narrative in which those who are to be colonized are alternately troped as animals or as criminals (177-178)

While the colonialist subtext of the narrative certainly provides ample grounds to investigate the problematic oscillations of criminality, animality and otherness, it would be myopic to look for them only in the non-European theatres of the novel. The narrative stages its main animal attack scenes, one unprovoked and the other by all means unprovoked, in the continental landscape of the Pyrenees, where Crusoe comes in conflict with the fauna of France. The zoomorphically imagined human

criminals, symbolically foreshadowing the brutal animal encounters, are neither Caribs nor Africans but Europeans.

5.4 Perceiving predators

While the human predators of the Pyrenees remain a figment of the protagonist's imagination, the narrative – after neglecting it in favor of the Carib cannibals - spectacularly revives the motif of animal danger in its final by introducing intradiegetically real canid attackers and an anthropomorphically portrayed bear. Before in its last passages the novel shows animals to actually attack Crusoe, however, their hypothetical dangerousness is discussed at length. In its beginning stages, the narrative installs the topic effectively by repeatedly describing the great fear of animals suffered by the side character Xury, Crusoe's first companion, or rather objectified human pet-slave³³, later sold by his 'master' to a Portuguese captain. Xury is described as being so frightened by the "dreadful Noises of the Barking, Roaring, and Howling of Wild Creatures" (26) that Crusoe expresses fears the 'boy' might die.

Following the merely acoustic representation of wildlife, the narrative sends an unidentified animal swimming towards the boat on which the protagonist and his companion are floating along the West African Coast. The creature, however, even after it is discovered sensorily, remains invisible on several dimensions. As if the narrative were intricately paralleling popular contemporaneous philosophical notions that saw vision and reason – to fully see is to realize - in close metaphorical relation (see Senior 3), Crusoe and Xury initially do not notice the animal at all. Then they hear it and infer from the blowing sounds it generates that a "monstrous, huge and furious Beast" (27) must be closing in on them. When the animal enters the human characters' field of optical vision, it nonetheless remains intellectually invisible at least to the protagonist, for he does not know what to make of what his eyes see. Crusoe, for lack of zoological knowledge, cannot identify and thus categorize and 'realize' the animal. Forced to rely on information provided by his companion, who designates the

³³ In her analysis of categories of 'difference' in 18th Century British Culture, Roxann Wheeler (cf. 54-66) perceives the relationship between Crusoe and Xury as too complex as to be categorized as that of master and slave, especially in light of the text's complex configurations of 'difference'. In concordance with these observations, I nonetheless base my assessment on the evident disparity of power in their relationship.

approaching being as a lion, Crusoe reluctantly accepts the hypothesis: “and it might be so for ought I know!” (28) and the animal is preliminarily denominated. Taxonomical categorization, a central endeavor of the then budding field of natural history, is represented as a problematic endeavor. In Crusoe’s ‘discovery’ of the animal, categorical definition marks the final stage of a cognition process, initiated by sensory experience and followed by notice, examination and conjecture. Lack of information, however, makes it difficult for Crusoe to achieve reliable results, thus he resorts to a preliminary hypothesis ‘for ought he know’. In this light, the naming of the animal appears more like a wanton than a scientific act.

Crusoe’s ignorance is possibly a literary reflection of 18th century peoples’ restricted access to information about non-European animals and the questionable verisimilitude of contemporary illustrations, yet it seems inconsistent with the protagonist’s intradiegetic educational status. Born to a wealthy German-English family with an affinity for learning and given the lion’s status as one of the world’s most widely recognized animal symbols (see Guggisheim 138-179), ubiquitously present in the arts, literature or heraldry, Crusoe is unlikely to know so little about the species’ characteristics to not allow him to recognize it in the wild.

While the animal’s zoological identity remains doubtful, the narrative has Crusoe quickly and undemocratically decide on a course of action and the empirical part of the examination is conducted through the barrel of a gun. Against the wishes of the frightened Xury, Crusoe chooses fight over flight and shoots at the ‘lion’, driving it back to the shore. The passage’s portrayal of the animal’s behavior is ambiguous, it neither describes any signs of aggression, nor does it provide any specifics regarding the manner of approach. There is no information about the animal’s intentions, no speculation about its motivations and no explanation of its reactions. We are only told that it manages to come “within Two Oars Length” (27) of the boat, implying it is swimming silently enough to surprise Crusoe, which could imply predatory stalking behavior. Finally, we are informed that the animal immediately flees or at least abandons its ‘attack’ when encountering human aggression or human defensive behavior.

When we assume an experimental perspective not mediated by the narrator, we see a pair of invasive human-animal predators with limited sensory capacities. Their social

structure is organized hierarchically. The younger male shows signs of distress upon detection of a large local specimen of an unverified, possibly predatory species. The older male, potentially protective of the younger male, exhibits territorial/defensive aggression against the non-human predator upon transgression into a perceived zone of critical distance. A non-fatal attack is undertaken by the older human male with long-range tools that act as an effective deterrent against the approaching non-human animal. The latter did not exhibit identifiable signs of physical aggression during the interspecies encounter, thus leaving the question what elicited the human attack. Insufficient data does not allow to determine whether the aggression was anti-predatorially or territorially motivated, it could also have been a display of dominance. From this perspective we see powerful human aggression and - viewing the gun as an organic part of Crusoe - we see physical superiority.

5.5 Gunbarrel husbandry - humans, animals and technology

After defeating the 'monstrous beast', Crusoe contemplates the impact of his weapon on the local wildlife. From an ethologist's position, he surmises that the sound of the gunshot must have been unfamiliar to the animals, hence their hysterical reaction:

it is impossible to describe the horrible Noises, and hideous Cryes and Howlings, that were raised [...] 'pon the Noise or Report of the Gun, a Thing I have some Reason to believe those Creatures had never heard before. (27-28)

In a similarly configured gunfire sequence, the narrative shifts its focus on the reaction of the local human 'wildlife'. Crusoe, still in ethologist mode, observes two agitated animals interacting with each other but cannot discern if they are exhibiting fighting or mating behavior. A group of locals is watching the animals as well and the protagonist *-mise en abyme-* becomes observer of observers of what he himself observes. Malamud (4) succinctly describes anthrozoology as a discipline that "looks at animals, and at the people looking at animals" and cautions that this look is predicated upon cultural location and bias of the one that casts it. Crusoe, assuming the role of anthrozoologist, studies both human and animal subjects with equidistant aloofness in an interlaced sequence of zoological and anthropological gazing and speculating. The protagonist, a few days earlier in the diegesis unable to identify as iconic an animal as

a lion, has surprisingly transformed into a wildlife expert. Crusoe observes the creatures' behavior, notes that their crepuscular disposition is in stark contradiction to their daytime agitation and infers that they must either be engaged in a mating ritual or a fight of life and death. Then he turns his attention to the locals and observes that they are startled by the animals' fight, particularly the women, who "were as stark Naked as the Men" (36). Crusoe's attention shifts seamlessly between humans and animals. He parallelly describes the somewhat unimpressive weapons of the local men and the fear of the women, goes back to comment on the fight of the animals and concludes that the two "ravenous Creatures [do] not seem to offer to fall upon any of the *Negroes* (33)." After Crusoe's comments, the narrative, in perfect replication of the earlier 'lion attack' scene, has one of the animal swims towards Crusoe, who loads his gun "with all possible Expedition" (35) and shoots the yet unidentified creature in the head:

[...] immediately he sunk down into the Water, but rose instantly and plung'd up and down as if he was struggling for Life; and so indeed he was, he immediately made to the Shore, but between the Wound which was his mortal Hurt, and the strangling of the Water, he dyed just before he reach'd the Shore. It is impossible to express the Astonishment of these poor Creatures at the Noise and the Fire of my Gun; some of them were even ready to dye for Fear, and fell down as Dead with the very Terror. (35)

The great power of gunpowder weaponry is staged on non-human animal body and human animal psyche. The indiscriminate parallelism with which the narrator gazes at both parties is oblivious of any species boundary except the one separating the protagonist from what he observes. The almost identical formula used in describing the gun's effect on first animals (as in the 'lion attack' scene), then non-European humans amplifies the noise of the shot.

The colonialist echo of the gun is rendered even more impressively in the gratitude than in the fear of the locals. Having killed the animal, posthumously identified as a leopard, Crusoe considers his deed a favor to the 'Negroes', "who held up their Hands with Admiration to think what it was I had kill'd him [the leopard] with (36)." The gun-god gifts them with the corpse, which, he surmises "they were for eating". Crusoe demands the skin as a trophy or trade item and is richly rewarded with provisions and water. Abandoning the narrow analytical focus on colonialist gunpowder-narcissism, the intercultural encounter can also be viewed as a simple trade interaction, essentially

benefiting both parties. As a “proto-capitalist adventure” (Logan 674), Crusoe has a strong economic subtext, and from this perspective we see a transaction, not a subjugation. The protagonist is in demand of goods, his suppliers provide their surplus produce, in exchange, Crusoe provides his, or rather capitalizes on the trade value of something that has no use-value for him: the meat of a large predatory animal³⁴. The ability to kill such animals is Crusoe’s trade advantage, the possession of gunpowder weaponry is essential for establishing and maintaining his position on the market. The combination of economic reasoning, firearms and animal commodification reappears in another killing scene. Crusoe shoots a sleeping lion, described by the narrator as a “dreadful Monster” (30), a repeatedly employed formula used in reference to large, potentially dangerous animals along similar monstrous, sensationalist or vilifying vocabulary. The danger emanating from the ‘monster’, however, is only an imagined one, the terrible, man-eating lion is a phantasma, whose real-life equivalent is a peacefully sleeping animal, while Crusoe and Xury watch it from the safe distance of their boat. Olson (177) views such instances of merely perceived threat – hypothetical cannibal or animal attacks alike- used to justify destruction as a part of “the colonial myth that the novel perpetuates.” The protagonist’s repeatedly employed tactic of coastal bombardment, slightly reminiscent of a colonialist style of warfare heavily practiced in later centuries, is not only effective in keeping Crusoe physically ‘safe’ from dangerous wild animals but also in symbolically separating him from them. While the narrative shows him in close contact with domestic or domesticated animals, it is very strict about keeping him distant from wild creatures, both spatially and emotionally. In Defoe’s story of the “universal man”, as Coleridge (see Grapard and Hewitson 26) viewed Crusoe in his reenactment of civilization, the emancipation from wilderness is heavily aided by gunpowder, which the lion ‘attack scene impressively illustrates.

Observing the narrative’s rule of distance, Crusoe, neither provoked nor threatened, shoots the lion from afar. Before the shot is fired, the narrator meticulously describes the preparation rituals preceding the attack. First the arsenal is inspected, then the

³⁴ Looking into the different culinary value attributed to leopard meat, of course, might lead back to the discourse of colonialist prejudice. A closer look at the text’s matrix of who eats what or whom focusing not only on anthropophagy but on dietary preferences in general as a device of othering might prove rewarding but is well outside the scope of this paper.

choice of proper weapon is discussed, loading procedures are explained, followed by a closer look at the aiming process. The significant narratorial attention devoted to the firearms themselves reflects marked interest in gunpowder technology. Crusoe goes for the animal's head but misses and instead hits the knee. The animal's agony is described in great detail, highlighting the impact of Crusoe's weaponry. Yet, the dying body of the lion does not only serve as a projection screen for the efficacy of gunpowder but is also used for what Armstrong (32) describes as an initiation ritual in Crusoe's "system of gunbarrel husbandry". In a paternalistic gesture of permission, Crusoe, after having mortally wounded and immobilized the lion with a second shot, grants Xury the right to finish it, or rather, him³⁵ off, gives him a small gun and sends him swimming to the shore like a hunting dog, where Xury kills the animal with a headshot. This execution foreshadows another, even more bizarre christening in Crusoe's religion of gunpowder. In a strikingly similar scene of unnecessitated slaughter, Crusoe's later side character Friday kills a bear, whose anthropomorphic abuse will be discussed in another chapter, with a headshot and is thus initiated into the circle of seasoned firearm-users. Armstrong (32) notes that Crusoe intends to 'humanize' or rather 'deanimalize' his companions and by teaching them in the use of gunpowder weapons "allow[s] them access to a form of enlightened humanity defined by its separation from and dominion over animality."

Such father-son dynamics in Crusoe's relationship to his companions do not stand in contradiction to the master-servant or master-dog³⁶ elements. The diminutive juxtaposition of their 'hunting' roles and the somewhat comical phallic size comparison of the characters' weapons -Xury's small gun, Crusoe's big one- reflect the imbalance of power in their relationship and signify Xury as a miniature Crusoe or his "young replica", as Wheeler (63) puts it in the discussion of a historical painting picturing the scene. Crusoe's little version is in no ways his equal, of course, as the narrative not only shows by comparing the characters' guns but by contrasting their mental states.

³⁵ In Defoe's text, the lion is referred to as 'he'. By (occasionally) attributing neutral pronouns to non-human animals, I do not mean to objectify or depreciate them, nor do I imply animal gender were less deserving of respectful consideration than human gender. In contexts of this kind, grammatical neutrality is chosen for reasons of readability without intent of discrimination.

³⁶ Armstrong points out that Friday (similar as in Xury's case) becomes recipient of Crusoe's sympathy and affection along the terms of a relationship resembling that of dog and master and "the attributes ascribed to Friday are identical to those of Crusoe's canine familiars: willing and loyal subalternity expressed as an enthusiastic and slightly comical affability." (44)

Xury- epitomizing animal angst- is terribly afraid the lion might eat him: "*Me kill! he eat me at one Mouth*" (30). His fear of the non-human animal is in contrast to his sacrificial willingness to be eaten by supposedly cannibalistic inhabitants of the African coast. "*If wild Mans come, they eat me, you go wey!*" (29), he declares to Crusoe in an earlier scene. Implicit religious, moral and cultural/racial othering of the non-Judeo-Christian Xury (cf. Wheeler 50-62) might be one way to explain why he finds the prospect of being eaten by a lion considerably more terrifying than being consumed by a human, insinuating he might be culturally closer to the 'wild Mans' than Crusoe. Yet Crusoe's status as a representative of civilization and even more fundamentally: humanity does not go unquestioned. Imagining himself without access to weapons, Crusoe zoomorphically portrays himself as a predator in the act of feeding, à la 'you are *how* you eat:

That if I had kill'd a Goat, or a Fowl, by any Contrivance, I had no way to flea or open them, or part the Flesh from the Skin, and the Bowels, or to cut it up; but must gnaw it with my Teeth, and pull it with my Claws like a Beast.no way to flea or open them, or part the Flesh from the Skin, and the Bowels, or to cut it up; but must gnaw it with my Teeth, and pull it with my Claws like a Beast. (154)

Armstrong (32-33) analyzes that "Crusoe's fantasies about his own transformation to beastliness make it clear that not only his immediate survival, but also his maintenance of modern humanity, as defined against both animality and savagery, depend upon items salvaged from the European commercial and ideological economy." The narrator gives a graphic description of Crusoe's 'weapons', that is his teeth and claws, whereas animals remain strangely toothless until the very end of the novel. While Crusoe's Phantasmas of being eaten by animal (or human) fiends permeate the text, his imagination remains too abstract to picture voracious mouths with sharp dentition actually doing the devouring. Even the intradiegetically real leopards and lions do not show their teeth, there is no biting and no clawing, not even scratching. Only in the text's final passages animals are shown in their physical capacity to hurt or kill humans and although they are granted to bite and cause injury, their bodily equipment to do so is not afforded significant detail.

In contrast, the minutiae of gunpowder weapons and their effective use against animals (and, of course, mostly non-European humans) are routinely demonstrated in

extensive passages. As the zoomorphic feeding passage quoted above demonstrates, however, humans do not need advanced weaponry to trump the non-human fauna's arsenal. When Crusoe imagines himself at his weakest, without access to the most basic tools of civilization, he nonetheless remains a human animal with very sharp incisors and claws. Even in his phantasmal beastly state, Crusoe is an apex predator firmly seated at the top of the diegetic food-chain.

Marchesini (quoted in Sax 44), in his endeavor to debunk what he calls the "myth of incompleteness", describes human senses and physique as robust and – in a number of regards – formidable, quite contrary to Gehlen's (1940) notion of humans as 'Mängelwesen' (deficient being, transl. by me) in need of culture to compensate for their inferior natural endowment. Defoe's main character, while bemoaning the lack of culture and throughout his time on the island seeking to remedy it, certainly is no feeble creature unfit to survive if divorced from civilization. He is a big, tough, strong hominid, capable of dominating his environment even without technological means. The text implicitly underlines this circumstance by not populating its main setting with any relevant non-human competitors. Thus, the main portion of the text shows gunpowder - epitomizing technological and civilizational superiority- as not essential for establishing human rule over wildlife. It is a mere advantage, in its efficacy illustrated on the bodies of animals, yet its true relevance becomes evident in intraspecies competition. Crusoe's gun monopoly, along with his engineering mind-set, distinguish him as the true *sapiens* among the other specimens of his kind, the non-human creatures simply attest to this fact.

5.6 Categories of compassion – animal ethics and economy

Although not immune to anxiety or melancholia, Crusoe principally looks at his world through the eyes of a seasoned insurance mathematician. He unexcitedly calculates the various risks and opportunities and draws lists and charts. "Security from ravenous Creatures, whether Men or Beasts" (67) is the third of four criteria in his search for a suitable shelter on the island he is shipwrecked on. After the protagonist comes to assume that there are no dangerous predators on the island, he immediately charts this condition on a comparative table. Armstrong points to parallels between *Crusoe* and Defoe's 1713 *Review*, which exhibits a similar accountant's approach.

Contemplating the usefulness of animals to humans and the catastrophic effects a lack of animal docility would have on human economy, the text (quoted in Armstrong 44) divides animals into the categories “useful” and “useless”. Domestic animals rank among the former and wild animals, especially if they are of predatory nature or in the author’s words “at war with us”, fall into the latter category. Armstrong illustrates how such views are expressed in Crusoe’s attitudes in the novel: “House cats are entitled to (limited) moral consideration, but the feral cats on the island and big cats in Africa are not; dogs are but not wolves; goats but not bears; parrots but not hawks” and attributes this categorization and the ensuing vilification of non-domestic animals to a conflict between their non-human agency and the ordering principles of modernity. While use-value-based speciesism is a central characteristic of Crusoe’s thinking about non-human animals, Armstrong shows that similar methods of distinction are applied in Crusoe’s appraisal of the non-European natives portrayed in the novel: Their usefulness – and thus their main value - to Crusoe is defined by their degree of ‘domesticity’ and mainly for that reason are moral considerations or sympathy extended to them. Only when they act as trade partners, the ‘savages’ of the coast of Africa become ethically relevant. (cf. Armstrong 44)

Crusoe’s cost-benefit analytics are rigorously implemented through either animal or gunbarrel husbandry. When his house cats unexpectedly mate with feral specimen and grow in numbers, the protagonist declares the animals he former considered ‘family’ have become ‘Vermine’ (cf 120) and starts an eradication mission. While parrot ‘Poll’ is kept on the shoulder as feathered surrogate of human speech, his conspecifics are shot from the trees just to show Friday the “wonderful Fund of Death and Destruction” in a gun” (250). Goats are alternately reared, milked, killed or left to die; Lions, leopards and hawks are shot because they are predators and as such categorically not eligible for compassion. While Crusoe clearly observes the great pain his knee-shot causes the lion described in the previous chapter, he only bemoans a waste of resources:

This was Game indeed to us, but this was no Food, and I was very sorry to lose three Charges of Powder and Shot upon a Creature that was good for nothing to us. (31)

Since the animal is unsuitable for consumption, a possible use for it is sought. ‘Entertainment’ is considered, yet limited availability of gunpowder leads the

protagonist to conclude that the costs outweigh the benefits: 'twas fun but too expensive.

While utilitarian³⁷ thought and Presbyterian frugality align in the character's summary of the scene, ethical questions are not raised. Quite in contrast to shot and powder used to end it, the lion's life has no inherent value for Crusoe and the animal's evident suffering is no cause for scruples. According to what Nash (cf. 101-118) diagnoses as "Protestant Georgic ideology of use-value", Crusoe finds a redeeming aspect of the killing in the potential salvaging of the lion's skin, while Xury is fixated on cutting off the animal's head as a trophy. He only manages to take a foot, however, which is described to be "a monstrous great one" (31). Subsequently, he acts as Crusoe's laborer and processes the animal's body, thus transforming it into a tradeable commodity for the mercantile Crusoe, who, ironically as well as consequently, later commodifies his worker and trades him for currency, demonstrating that his prioritization of use-value permeates the species boundary - ironically, Crusoe, who consequently kills non-human predators out of economic principles, proves to be a consequent economic predator.

5.7 Final attack – physical conflict

Whereas Africa or the Caribbean could have provided, perhaps, more spectacular fighting arenas, the narrative chooses to stage real (as in involving physical contact) animal attacks exclusively in Europe. The dangerous beasts of Africa are either confined to the protagonist's imagination or, when they are not, are preemptively shot from safe distance. The animals on Crusoe's island face an invasive British apex-predator who kills or keeps them at will and against whom even the animalized Carib cannibals cannot compete.

Back in England, there is no dangerous fauna left to tell about, thus the narrator must look elsewhere and chooses the Pyrenees as locale for the text's only effectively life-threatening animal encounter from human point of view. On their way from Lisbon to

³⁷ My usage of the colloquially ambiguous term 'utilitarian' is centered on the consequentialist aspect of purpose-orientation. I do not intend to suggest Utilitarianism were unethical or Machiavellian in its endeavor to maximize *utility*, which for Utilitarians is a pronouncedly ethical concept.

Calais, Crusoe and Friday must cross the French-Spanish mountain range and enlist the help of a local guide, who warns them against the danger of wolves “made ravenous for Want of Food” (345), for in the story it is wintertime. The protagonist – reinvoking the theme of gunbarrel-husbandry- discards the warning, declaring that he and Friday are “armed sufficiently to protect [themselves] from wild Beasts” (345) and that he considers brigands the more relevant threat.

Joined by a group of twelve male fellow-travelers, the protagonist successfully traverses meandering paths and “dreadful Hills and Precipices” (355). Upon his arrival on the French side of the mountains, the narrative deceptively inverts the motif and focuses on the bucolic elements of inanimate nature, describing “green and flourishing” (355) landscapes, yet it leaves them in the distance while it keeps the protagonist stalled at the foot of the Pyrenees by heavy snowfall. The setting encompasses several elements of what would eventually become staple features of gothic fiction, which had, of course, yet to emerge as a consolidated literary phenomenon by the time *Crusoe* was written. Nature is portrayed as menacing in uncanny images, liminality is realized spatially through the labyrinthine mountain-passage and arguably the ‘in-betweenness’ of the journey as a whole, gloomy atmosphere is established through repeated mentioning of cold and darkness and the initial warning is a narrative device to create a threatening sense of foreboding.

“Two hours before Night” animate nature is introduced as antagonist, when “three monstrous Wolves, and after them a Bear” (346) rush out of a hollow way. After first exposition of the animal enemy, the narrative structures the attack in three parts. An initial attack shows a small number of wolves attacking and injuring the group’s guide, who has ridden ahead, then a comic relief-interlude focuses on Friday, whose initiative has ended the first attack, engage in a mock battle with an anthropomorphically rendered bear, finally, an extended passage stages the main fight between humans and wolves as a large-scale battle.

Abandoning the pattern of showing attacks *on* instead of attacks *by* animals, the text simultaneously changes the way it describes them. Hitherto vague about physical characteristics and behavior of its predators, the narrative now offers a lot of detail and action. Quite in contrast to the diffusely abstract big cats, the wolves are decidedly corporeal and animated. One reason for this difference of representation or, rather,

presence might be found in the fact that the narrative keeps the exotic predators in blurry distance from the human characters. They are either immaterial phantasmas, or, when they are intradiegetically 'real', too far away to be physically experienced, while the wolves get close enough to scratch and hurt and bite.

Crusoe's wolves are fictional predators of the 18th century, a time when real wolves were still abundant in many European countries. Well into the 20th century, before the continent's largest undomesticated canids had either been eradicated, driven into remote pockets of wilderness or confined to reservations, wolf attacks were a common phenomenon throughout the continent. In some regions, human-lupine conflict was considered so severe, that wolf hunting was made a civic duty, such as in Scandinavia, where as late as 1900 the law required citizens to regularly engage in cullings (cf. Evans 2016, 357). According to Boitani and Mech (448), wolf bounties were regularly paid in Italy until the 1950ies. Ending a 50-year ban on wolf hunting issued in the 1960ies, population control measures- including targeted killings- were reinstated by the Swedish government in 2009. The decision sparked an ongoing public debate and according to the zoomorphically headlining PRI still has "Swedish animal rights activists howling". In France, a special unit called *luparii* (cf. Weiß 3) was tasked with keeping wolf numbers in check since the times of Charlemagne, the office of *louve-tier royal* or Wolfmaster Royal exists until today. In the 17th and 18th century, several streaks of fatal attacks caused terror among the French population. The *Beast of Gévaudan*, arguably Europe's most prolific animal 'serial killer' of humans, according to a 1987 study (cf. Andersen et al. 19) attacked as many as 210 people, resulting in 113 casualties and 49 injuries. Many of the bodies are said to have been partially consumed and had their throats torn out. The killings sparked a nationwide hysteria and even elicited royal military intervention. The case had a significant cultural impact and has inspired several fictionalizations, such as Élie Berthet's 1862 novel *La Bête du Gévaudan*, Robert Sherard's 1904 novel *Wolves: An Old Story Retold*, Patricia Bigg's 2009 novel *Hunting Ground* and the commercially successful 2001 French film *Le Pacte des loups* (English title: *Brotherhood of the Wolf*).

While the details of the case remain disputed, the example of Gévaudan might serve to illustrate that, at least in some countries, wolves were perceived as a serious threat in the 18th century and, according to the findings of Jean-Marc Moriceau, one of the

world's foremost authorities on the history of human-wolf conflict, the threat was not an imagined one. He has compiled extensive data on over 5000 wolf attacks on humans from the Middle Ages to the 20th century. Contrary to today's popular notion of the shy, gentle wolf, his analysis suggests that -at least in the past -wolves were not averse to killing and eating humans. Most attacks involved non-rabid specimens, women and children were the preferred targets and their flesh was regularly consumed. Particularly during the years 1691-1695 casualties peaked, a condition which in Moriceau's estimation (2014:15) had a bearing on the cultural impact of Charles Perrault *Le Petit Chaperon rouge* of 1697, the earliest known printed version (cf. Opie 93) of the famous fairy tale *Little Red Riding Hood*, suggesting that the danger of real wolves might have well been within its otherwise symbolic scope as a cautionary tale. Moriceau (2007) statistically identified various behavioral patterns, such as that attacks occurred independent of daytime and mostly in summer, not in winter.

Reading Defoe's literary portrayal of the attack with historical context and Moriceau's findings in mind, a look at aspects of realism and verisimilitude is warranted. Bulgarian philosopher Tsvetan Todorov (paraphrased in Birch 168) views verisimilitude as a "reality which lies between what readers *believe* to be true and a discourse", discourse can roughly be equated with 'public opinion'. He differentiates between cultural and generic verisimilitude, a distinction further elaborated on by Stephen Neale (cf. Hall 360-363). Cultural verisimilitude refers to what appears plausible to an audience given their cultural knowledge and context. Generic verisimilitude designates plausibility within the conventions of a specific genre. Realism is a highly complex notion in regards to the analysis of fiction. In the context of examining Defoe's literary representation of a wolf attack, this paper will use the term in its broad definition as 'faithful representation of reality', the essential problematicity of reality claims notwithstanding.

In *Crusoe*, the wolves attack in winter and in the night, their target is a medium-sized group of armed adult males on horseback and the narrator suggests the reason of the attack to most likely be scarcity of non-human food. Crusoe speculates that the actual target of the wolves are the group's horses and this hypothesis later receives support from local authorities with whom Crusoe retrospectively analyses the attack. While daytime and season do not constitute essential contradictions to Moriceau's data, the

fictional wolves' choice of target, a group of armed, adult male humans, certainly constitutes unusual behavior from both historical-statistical as well as modern behavioral perspective. Wolves are considered to be opportunistic predators, testing their prey for weaknesses and selecting it accordingly, generally seeking to minimize their risk of injury (cf. MacNulty 23-31), in contrast, the wolves portrayed in *Crusoe* appear anything but risk-averse. The noted preference for the horses is well in keeping with modern behavioral findings that define large ungulates – where available – as wolves' preferred prey. For *Crusoe*, this detail – along with the unusual scarcity of food – is important enough to mention it repeatedly, suggesting initial reservations against the notion of wolves being man-eaters³⁸. The narrative explores the question further by opening a motivic bracket. First, the group stumbles upon a group of wolves gnawing at the carcass of a horse, and decides not to interrupt them in order to save gunpowder – then – after a fighting sequence – the men find the bodies of humans: “we found the Carcass of another Horse, and of two Men, devour'd by the ravenous Creatures [...] the Mand, his Head, and the upper Part of his Body were eaten up.” (356) Similar to the attack on the guide in the first part of the wolf attack passage, isolation from a larger group resp. lack of numbers is implied as the cause of attack. This is in accordance with modern behavioral findings that describe wolves as endurance hunters trying to isolate their prey. Their well-documented tactic to chase their targets to the point of exhaustion is reflected in the narrative, as it shows the wolves to be shadowing the human group and pursuing it over extensive distance and a prolonged stretch of time.

These realistically represented aspects of wolf behavior are in stark contrast to the hyperbolic style of the narration. Size exaggerations and drastic attributions, already established in the description of the African predators, permeate the passage. The wolves are “monstrous”, “ravenous”, their howling the “dismallest” noise causing “so much Horrour”, they are “raging”, a man bitten by them is not just injured but “most hurt”, they are not only the “fiercest” but even “hellish creatures”, the number of which

³⁸ Jean-Marc Moriceau does -by no means – vilify wolves. He does not make any sensationalist generalizations about wolves, nor does he suggest that the species would habitually target humans. His extensive study, however, analyzes wolves' man-eating as a historical fact and is careful to conclude, that wolf behavior - quite like that of humans - is subject to historical change. I fully subscribe to this notion.

Crusoe believes to be three hundred³⁹, coming on “like devils” (cf. 355-358). Such descriptions are likely incompatible with the modern image of wolves as well as they are probably incommensurate with modern readers’ expectations regarding the ‘lifelikeness’ of an autobiographical text, which *Crusoe* deceptively purports to be. For Defoe’s coeval readership, however, well used to rhetorical flourish and undomesticated wolves in both real life and cultural imagination, such descriptions most likely neither compromised the text in terms of cultural nor generic verisimilitude. The second part of the wolf attack is especially interesting in this regard. After the initial, arguably both realistically and plausibly represented attack on the group’s guide, following a narratorial interlude, the wolves attack again, this time in great numbers. The narrator delineates a successful ambush, preceded by effective hit and run tactics, tailing and encirclement maneuvers. The attack is described in the style of a battle report, making heavy use of military imagery:

[...] we began to hear the Wolves howl in the Wood on our Left, in a frightful manner, and presently after we saw about a hundred coming on directly towards us, all in a Body, and most of them in a Line, as regularly as an Army drawn up by experience’d Officers. I scarce knew in what Manner to receive them; but found to draw ourselves in a close Line was the only way (354)

Crusoe’s tactical choice is followed by a treatise on the effectiveness of the line formation, a common way of deploying infantry until modernity, illustrated on the wolves’ bodies. Additionally, the men use acoustic deterrence to drive the wolves off. After having taken heavy losses, the animals make a tactical retreat but effectively encircle the group again and confront them at a chokepoint. While the wolves display significant military acumen, human intelligence is shown to prevail. The men build a barricade and although heavily outnumbered – Crusoe estimates ‘enemy numbers’ at over 300 – they manage to rout the predators. The clever use of an improvised explosive marks the turning point of the battle and thus gunpowder and ingenuity yet again signify human superiority. The technical stratagem alone, however, does not win

³⁹ While wolf pack size depends on habitat quality, pack sizes over 50 individuals are rarely documented. In their analysis of pack size in central Idaho, Stenglein et al. observed a range of 5-20 individuals per pack.

the war. While the wolves draw back after the explosion, the fight is not over before the men sally out and brutally slay the wounded wolves left struggling on the battlefield:

[...] twenty lame Ones, who we found struggling on the Ground, and fell a cutting them with our Swords, which answer'd our Expectation; for the Crying and Howling they made, was better understood by their Fellows, so that they all fled and left us. (358)

The tenacity of the wolves, who until this point were shown to keep coming despite heavy casualties, is finally broken by psychological means. Through displaying violence, the humans establish their position as apex predators. The wolves, on the other hand, are said to understand the gesture. While the anthropomorphic style of the battle report is far from verisimilar representation, a close look at the animals is afforded. Gregg (21) views Defoe as a writer “interested in more than merely shoring up the definition of the human”, referring to them as “sagacious Brutes” upon studying their behavior. His texts’ wolves certainly are intelligent creatures and their behavior, however anthropocentrically rendered, is displayed in a way that suggests that they possess sagacity. They are not just shown as biorobots acting on a program called ‘instinct’ but are portrayed in a manner which creates the impression that they – at least to some degree – are capable of employing tactics, making strategical decisions and the narrator states that they understand a ‘message’, if only that of human violence.

The narrator’s anthropomorphic lens does not look past the animal and although the battle scene focuses on human superiority and is celebrated as a triumph of human courage and ingenuity, it does not suggest humans and animals were inseparably divided, even though – or possibly because – they are shown in intense conflict. Assuming that Defoe had better access to information about large-scale human-human combat than on animal-human predation and therefore modeled human-animal conflict in military style, even assuming that staging the spectacle of such battles in his novel meant catering to the demands of his readership, the wolves have a life of their own, maybe to some degree get to be ‘wolvings’, even if not in accordance with 21st century expectations. Furthermore, although vilifying vocabulary is used in reference to them, they are not morally judged for attacking. Their need to feed – however unwillingly – is acknowledged and their effort in satisfying it is respected in so far as the narrative

shows them as serious opponents before it anthropocentrically gloats over their pre-staged defeat.

Quite different to the wolves, the narrative's bear does not get a 'walk on the wild side'. Cynically anthropomorphized by Crusoe as a "very nice Gentleman" who, however, "won't go a Step out of his Way for a Prince" (348), he is used as animal prop in a bizarre comical interlude between the wolf attacks. While in the text some species-specific physical and behavioral characteristics, such as preferred food, gait or causes for aggression are plausibly described and the animal is afforded personality traits such as vengefulness, obstinacy, tenacity and -to a limited degree- cunningness, it does not get to serve any purpose of its own. Instead, it functions as Friday's journeyman's piece on the road to gunpowder mastery and more importantly, it signals his final ascendance from animal to human state. After provoking the initially non-hostile bear into pursuing him, Friday announces to his skeptical 'master': "*No shoot, no shoot, stand still, you get much Laugh.*" The self-initiated duel situation, during which Friday demonstrates his superiority over the animal, is reminiscent of bear-baiting practices but with an infantile twist. Crusoe's companion first races the bear, then lures him up a tree and forces him into a see-saw game on the branches to "teachee the Bear dance" (351). Crusoe describes Friday as a "nimble creature", quicker than the bear, who is referred to as 'beast', signaling that he views Friday in a similar non-human category like his animal competitor. Ending the mock battle, Friday skillfully executes the outwitted bear with a headshot, demonstrating "how well he has learned the lessons of Crusoe's gunbarrel husbandry" (Armstrong 43). Although humorously anthropomorphized throughout the scene, the bear does not receive any kind of compassion. As an animal described in distinctly human terms, he is in fact dehumanized while through his slaughter, Friday is deanimalized, ascending to higher status through the demonstrative show of force. The bear and his obstinate, anthropomorphic 'agenda' is used to "trivialize [...] wild agency – exemplified by his refusal to accommodate his behavior to the presence of humans", as Armstrong (44), who views the marginalization of wild agency as a consequence of its incompatibility with modernity, puts it. Looking at the animals of Defoe's text, it seems offence is their best defense against such human encroachment.

6 Man-Eaters of Tsavo

John Henry Patterson's *The Man-eaters of Tsavo and Other East-African Adventures* (henceforth breve *TMOT*), was first published 1907 and turned into an international bestseller, still in print today (cf. Grande, 285). Apart from the book's segments telling the story⁴⁰ of the man-eating lions, henceforth referred to as titular narrative, which is told in ten consecutive chapters plus one separate chapter detailing the finding of the maneaters' den, *TMOT* features several shorter stories and other texts such as travel reports, newspaper articles and a hunting guide along with 351 illustrations, mainly photographs. *TMOT* is based on Patterson's experiences as an engineer and officer of the British army overseeing construction work on the Kenya-Uganda Railway between 1898-1899 (cf. Grande 286). In the titular narrative, the first-person narrator Patterson, in the following referred to as protagonist-narrator⁴¹, travels via Mombasa to a tent camp located near the Tsavo river in Kenya, where several hundred Indian laborers are stationed. Shortly after his arrival, the lions kill one of the workers. The protagonist-narrator orders the construction of so called bomas, stockades made out of thorny branches, around the camp. Despite the fortification measures, the lions manage to kill more laborers, causing panic among them. When construction work comes to a halt due to desertion, the protagonist-narrator, an experienced tiger hunter having served in India, sets out to hunt down the animals. The attacks continue for

⁴⁰ This study regards the central element of *TMOT*, the story of the man-eating lions, as an autobiographical (resp. memoir, because of the limited timespan it covers) narrative engaging in the literary representation of what it purports to be non-fictional events that occurred in the past. XU Yun (19) points out the "marginal status of autobiography between literary and non-literary genre, fiction and nonfiction, history and non-history". Collett (cf. 341-353) outlines the scholarly debate regarding a dichotomic categorization of fictional and nonfictional texts, stating that many literary theorists argue that "a wide range of non-fictional texts are or can "become" (341) works of literature. He paraphrases literary critic Kazin (343), who regards Hemingway's autobiography *A Moveable Feast* as a "narrative [...] which has no purpose other than to tell a story, to create the effect of a story, and which demands to be read for its value as a narrative." This study views *TMOT* as such a narrative and is especially interested in the literary and creative devices it employs in representing the non-fictional events it purports to be recounting.

⁴¹ The term is certainly problematic from a narratological perspective and in itself contradictory. It is employed mainly to allow differentiating between real-life Patterson and the protagonist of his book.

nearly a year until the protagonist-narrator manages to shoot one of the pair. A few weeks later, he tracks and kills the second lion, after which the laborers hail him as a hero and construction works are successfully completed. The titular narrative closes with a description of leopard and wild dog encounters.

The killing of the Tsavo lions made real-life Patterson an international celebrity (cf. Gaudi 240). If professional hunter F.C. Selous, author of the foreword to TMOT, is to be believed, American president Roosevelt, both big game hunter and conservationist⁴², commented on Patterson's lion story, told to him by Selous before it was published in TMOT, as follows:

"I think that the incident of the Uganda man-eating lions, described in those two articles you [addressed to Patterson] sent me, is the most remarkable account of which we have any record." (TMOT, xi)

Patterson kept the lions' skins as trophies, purportedly using them as rugs (cf. Weisberger), and later sold them to the Chicago Field museum, where- after taxidermic reconstruction- they have been on display to this day. Wilbert (cf. 33) points out that the museum has effectively established the man-eaters as a brand, generating profit through Tsavo-themed merchandise such as T-shirts, caps and the likes.

Wilbert (cf. 33) states that the "fascination with this story, or what the narrative offered to writers, filmmakers, and others, has never really abated" , inspiring – among others - the 1952 movie *Bwana Devil*, the first commercially released 3-D film, or the 1996 movie *The Ghost and the Darkness*, retelling Patterson's account and, according to Wilbert, reproducing "the narrative of the white military man being outmaneuvered by the lions but ultimately rescuing workers and local people" (33).

Several scientific studies have examined the Tsavo lions, such as de Santi's et al. analysis of the dead specimens' teeth or Yeakel's et al. investigation of the animals' cooperative behavior and dietary specialization. In contrast, Patterson's titular narrative has attracted little scholarly attention despite its impact on popular culture. Wilbert, who discusses the cultural echo of animal attacks and animal attack narratives

⁴² Kheel critically examines the late 19th century hunter-conservationists and their ideals of 'manliness' with a special focus on the complexities of Roosevelt's hunting passion in relation to his advocacy for wildlife protection (cf. 70-81).

from an animal studies perspective, briefly touches on Patterson's titular narrative in the context of the cult of trophy hunting (cf. 34), however, no extensive literary analyses of TMOT have been conducted as of yet.

6.1 Cultural and historical context

TMOT was written and published during what Kitchen calls the "heyday of Empire" (cf. 43), an era signified by British rule over large swaths of the world. While imperialist ideology promoted ethnocentric claims of superiority, the theory of evolution shattered anthropocentric beliefs of exceptionalism (cf. Rohman 3). According to Rohman, Darwin's 1859 *On the Origin of Species* dealt a "catastrophic blow to human privilege vis-à-vis the species question" (1), leading to a "rethinking [of] the most elementary contours of human identity and the human connection to other sentient life" (2). Although Darwin's findings are considered to have effectuated a paradigm shift, Rohman emphasizes that especially outside the scientific community their groundbreaking dimension was neither immediately nor consistently registered (cf. 5). TMOT does not explicitly discuss the 'species question' to which the theory of evolution had answered with a fundamental redefinition of the biological boundaries between humans and animals, yet -as will be shown - barriers that separate humans and predators play a key role in the titular narrative. The following analysis will examine the text's representation of these barriers and how their demarcation, defense and transgression reflect on both human-animal and human-human hierarchies.

Darwin's biological theories were eventually employed in the context of imperialism. Sadeghi & Royanian point out that Social Darwinists, a term coined in the late 19th century, applied Darwinian notions such as 'natural selection' or 'survival of the fittest'⁴³ in the social and political domain to provide justifications for imperialist and colonialist endeavors. (cf. 139-141). Perry et al. state that "Social Darwinists insisted that nations and races were engaged in a struggle for survival in which only the fittest survive and deserve to survive" (2013, 566). In *The Animal Estate* Ritvo discusses the human-animal relationship in the Victorian era. Among many other aspects, she explores the interconnections between British imperialism and the status and representation of

⁴³ The phrase 'survival of the fittest' was not coined by Darwin but goes back to Herbert Spencer, who used it in a comparison of his economic theories to Darwin's theory of evolution (cf. Stucke, 951).

animals, pointing out several correlations between the subjugation of exotic animals and colonial subjects, especially in the context of zookeeping and big game hunting⁴⁴.

Kete, discussing the 19th to mid-20th century hunting cult with a focus on the practice of tiger hunting in the British Raj, states that:

It was about imperial power and surveillance. It was also about asserting control over people people through control over beasts. The tiger was the bounty, the prey, and the challenge. The British took up the charge of defending their subjects from tigers [...] It is no wonder, perhaps, that the tiger's place in the British imagination of the Raj was so secure. (14)

Hunting was also about taking trophies that “in the form of skins, heads, and horns littered the floors, walls, and mantles of country estates throughout Britain” (Kete, 14). The British empire, its colonial subjects, the animal kingdom, big game hunting and the theme of survival and selection all figure prominently in TMOT. In the following, a close look will be taken at the dynamics of killing, eating and hunting in the texts, focusing on the questions: Who kills/hunts/eats whom? Who is killed/hunted/eaten? Who is not? How and Why is the killing/hunting/eating done? Furthermore, the power structures governing human-animal and human-human interactions in the texts will be examined in correlation.

In his book *Ghosts of Tsavo*, American journalist Philip Caputo characterizes TMOT as a stylistically antimodernist “saga that welds myth and reality”, describing actual events while reading like fiction (cf. 25). In 1903, a literary debate broke out revolving around perceived conflicts between science and sentiment in American nature writing. In the course of the so-called nature-fakers controversy naturalists, writers and even political figures, such as Theodore Roosevelt, disputed over the question how the natural world should be represented in popular nature writing. Writers like Jack London, Ernest Seton or William J. Long were accused of misrepresenting wildlife in anthropomorphic and sentimental portrayals, of writing “unnatural history”, as Roosevelt (quoted in Stewart, 97) put it. Opponents of ‘sentiment’ argued against

⁴⁴ Cf. esp. Part III “Animals and Empire” (205-290).

'humanizing' representations of animals as beings with unique mentalities or personalities with the capability to learn and adapt and demanded that nature writers remain 'faithful' to nature and adhere to the 'facts' as observed by natural history (cf. Lutts, 37-68). The controversy eventually ended in 1907, according to Lutts (cf. 169), redefining standards of accuracy for nature writers. Although the debate was fought in America, there is a direct connection to TMOT. Roosevelt was not only one of the most prominent opponents of 'sentiment' but – as mentioned above - is also quoted in Patterson's book, praising it as a "remarkable account". The following analysis will examine the texts' representation of animals in regards to their compliance with or deviation from the standards of the opponents of 'sentiment', focusing on aspects of anthropomorphism, individuality and agency.

TMOT, although a work of nonfiction, bears similarities to the narratives of British adventure fiction. According to Kestner, in the 1880ies readers' attention shifted from realistic novels, such as those of George Eliot or Anthony Trollope, towards a newly popular genre presenting them with "improbable stories of men defying death in exotic foreign lands" (Kestner, paraphrased by Hitchner, 544), a plot schema to which TMOT essentially adheres. Mangum, using a different term for the same genre, examines selected works of British adventure fiction from an animal studies perspective. She states that:

Nowhere is the animal at once so ferocious and so admired as in the genre that has been called empire fiction. Anxieties over the implications of evolution [...] fueled desires and doubts about the place of British adventurers in territories. (166)

H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) or Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* (1912) are some of the most prominent examples of these narratives which, according to Mangum, "for the most part celebrate European triumphs over people and creatures across the globe" (170). Mangum points out several animal-specific characteristics of the genre, some of which will be discussed in the individual chapters of the following analysis.

6.2 Feline foes – fact & fiction

Several early 19th century zoological descriptions of large felid predators portray them as bloodthirsty creatures. Examples of this practice can be found in Bewick's compendium on quadrupeds (206), where – among other big cats - the tiger is characterized as "fierce without provocation [...], it's thirst for blood [...] insatiable". Buffon, in his *Natural History* (88), reports that the cougar, when feeding, will not stop "until he has gorged his appetite and glutted his blood-thirsty fury". Such dramatic descriptions of ferocious, insatiable beasts are not found in the seminal ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, published between 1875-1889 and remembered as the 'scholar's edition'⁴⁵, which chooses a more neutral tone in its discussion of large felids' behavior. The species 'lion' is described in great anatomical and ethological detail, without sensationalist vocabulary. Regarding its social structure, for instance, *Panthera leo* is characterized as a gregarious animal, living together in large prides with a monogamous mating system⁴⁶. In one of the texts of TMOT following the titular narrative, tigers and lions are compared regarding their formidability as foes, the protagonist-narrator opts for the lion, which might be interpreted as a colonial commentary, given that they are the respective symbols of India and Great Britain. The passage describes the animals' temperaments:

Spooner and I had often had many friendly arguments in regard to the comparative courage of the lion and the tiger, he holding the view that "Stripes" was the more formidable foe, while I, though admitting to the full-the courage of the tiger, maintained from lively personal experience that the lion when once roused was unequalled for pluck and daring, and was in fact the most dangerous enemy one could meet with. He may at times slink off and not show fight; but get him in the mood, or wound him, and only his death or yours will end the fray—that, at least, was my experience of East African lions. (267-268)

The stylistic flourish and the hyperbole of this passage are characteristic of the titular narrative's description of animals and at first glance appear to be incompatible to anti-sentimentalist standards of nature writing, however the protagonist-narrator cares to

⁴⁵ Cf. History of Encyclopædia Britannica and Britannica Online.

⁴⁶ Contrary to the Victorian-era edition's state of knowledge, Roland W. Kays of the modern-day online version of the *Britannica* describes both sexes of the species as polygamous. (cf. Kays

mark his speculations about the animals with modifiers (italics added by me), even in dramatic depictions such as the following:

Pools of blood marked these halting-places, where he *doubtless* indulged in the man-eaters' habit of licking the skin off so as to get at the fresh blood. (*I have been led to believe* that this is their custom from the appearance of two half-eaten bodies which I subsequently rescued: the skin was gone in places, and the flesh looked dry, *as it if had been sucked*.) On reaching the spot where the body had been devoured, a dreadful spectacle presented itself. The ground all round was covered with blood and morsels of flesh and bones, but the unfortunate jemadar's head had been left intact, save for the holes made by the lion's tusks on seizing him, and lay a short distance away from the other remains, the eyes staring wide open with a startled, horrified look in them. The place was considerably cut up, and on closer examination we found that two lions had been there and *had probably* struggled for possession of the body. (23-24)

Graphic descriptions of anthropophagy, esp. those focusing on dismemberment and body fluids, are a standard feature of the text and regularly follow descriptions of the animals' invasions, mainly at night, into the sphere of humans and their taking of prey. Some of those invasions are portrayed directly, in scenes which show predators in the act of taking prey:

The lion sprang at his throat and after a few vicious shakes the poor bhisti's agonising cries were silenced for ever. The brute then seized him in his mouth, like a huge cat with a mouse, and ran up and down the boma looking for a weak spot to break through. (34)

Other attacks are indirectly presented, for instance via recapitulation (e.g. "I found that one of the lions had jumped over the newly erected fence and had carried off the hospital bhisti", 32). There is also a hybrid form, temporally synchronous but spatially distant, with the protagonist-narrator describing his acoustic impressions of an attack happening in the distance. Descriptions of attacks are followed by descriptions of the search for bodies, the finding of bodies and, as illustrated in the example above, the gruesome depiction of human corpses.

The predators' intelligence is commented on frequently, in descriptions such as this one:

They almost appeared, too, to have an extraordinary and uncanny faculty of finding out our plans beforehand (26)

The animals' extraordinary faculties are emphasized throughout the text and are shown to have a confounding effect on humans. While the protagonist-narrator, as in the passage above, refrains from directly stating suspicions of supernatural or demonic powers, he indirectly characterizes the animals as 'devils' and 'demons' (68) by stressing that the Indian laborers' believe the lions to be these demonic beings. Throughout the text, both terms are consistently parenthesized, emphasizing the skepticism of the protagonist-narrator, who nonetheless at one point utters suspicions that the lions might bear "charmed lives":

it seemed as if the lions were really "devils" after all and bore a charmed life. (68)

Wilbert (33) regards real-life Patterson's bewilderment at the animals' intelligence, determination and calculation as a "colonialist's inability to frame the man-eater as animal", owed to the belief that these qualities were reserved for humans, key qualities constituting agency. Throughout the text, the lions are characterized as extraordinarily strong, clever, fearless and fierce (esp. chpt 6). Also, they are shown unperturbable when feeding:

Mr. Dalgairns, fired over fifty shots in the direction in which he heard the lions, but they were not to be frightened and calmly lay there until their meal was finished. (67)

The protagonist-narrator later intimates that the animals are able to calculate risk, therefore do not flee (70), he also states his belief that they have learning skills. The historical Tsavo lions have been subject of ethological analysis. Holden (657) speculates that the lions of the region might have developed a man-eating culture, passed on from one generation to another by active teaching. Biologists have also investigated the teeth of the historical lions and have confirmed that they were man-eaters (Patterson et al. 2003). In TMOT it is stated that the lions killed 28 people, including a comment on the historical record-keeping practices, which were obviously racially biased:

they had devoured between them no less than twenty-eight Indian coolies, in addition to scores of unfortunate African natives of whom no official record was kept. (106)

In an abridged account of his experiences (John Henry) Patterson wrote for the Chicago Field museum in 1925, he raises the number to 128 fatalities (1925, 3). It might be argued that the drastic increase serves the purpose of spectacle and might be an intentional exaggeration. In the preface of TMOT, the author explicitly states that he is not exaggerating:

I have no doubt that many of my readers, who have perhaps never been very far away from civilisation, will be inclined to think that some of the incidents are exaggerated. I can only assure them that I have toned down the facts rather than otherwise, and have endeavoured to write a perfectly plain and straightforward account of things as they actually happened.

Patterson obviously expected that his account would be met with skepticism. F.C. Selous speaks on the text's behalf in the foreword and confirms that the representation is in accordance with his experiences as professional hunter. It is safe to assume that the humble authorial statement and Selous' commentary were strategically inserted to convey authenticity. On the narrative level, reticence in the use of anthropomorphic metaphors might be a stylistic strategy the text employs to achieve this effect. Although some instances of anthropomorphism (e.g. 105) can be found in the text, the representation, despite the dramatic prose, does not tend to humanize animals, instead stresses their animality and alterity. The protagonist-narrator commonly refers to them as 'savage brutes' (e.g. 16), 'monster', or 'enemy' (97), certainly vilifying vocabulary. Furthermore, he describes their 'den' (chapter 14) in the style of a dragon's lair, littered with human remains. In contrast, their physique and physical actions are rendered in a relatively realistic mode without size exaggerations or implausible movements, arguably in accordance with positivist standards of nature writing and might reflect the author's familiarity with the animals portrayed in his text.

6.3 Human-animal Boundaries

Holmes (2009) posits that "Darwin's influence pervades late Victorian and Edwardian fiction of all kinds, from fantasies to realist novels." Hybrid creatures, for instance,

destabilizing “clear boundaries and hierarchies that separated humans from animals” (Mangum, 172) are found in the works of H.G. Wells, according to Mangum, a literary manifestation of Darwin’s influence and thematizing the species divide. Barriers separating humans from animals play an important role in TMOT. At the beginning of the titular narrative, the protagonist-narrator is quartered in an unprotected tent. When he discovers the “pug” marks of a lion near his quarters, the text’s first intimation of proximity between European characters and lions, he immediately relocates and orders the construction of bomas:

Warned by this experience, I at once arranged to move my quarters, and went to join forces with Dr. Brock [...]. We shared a hut of palm leaves [...] and we had it surrounded by a circular boma, or thorn fence, about seventy yards in diameter, well made and thick and high. Our personal servants also lived within the enclosure (29-30)

The thorn corrals, made out of bushes taken from the wilderness surrounding the camp, are built for the Europeans and their personal servants, while the Indian workmen remain unprotected. The lions come close to the boma within which the Europeans are located but do “not succeed in getting through” (cf. 31). They test the barrier several times but cannot penetrate it. In a later scene, a train wagon proves to be an impenetrable barrier separating Europeans from the predators. The protagonist-narrator and Dr. Brock, the camp’s physician, barricade themselves in the wagon and tie cattle to it as bait for the lions. The animals attack at night and are driven off by gunshots, “frightened by the noise of the double report which was increased a hundredfold by the reverberation of the hollow iron roof of the truck”, one of the text’s many mentions of guns and their effect (40). In another episode, unconnected to the titular narrative, a lion attacks a train station but cannot force his way in:

A man-eating lion [...] climbed up on to the roof of the station buildings and tried to tear off the corrugated-iron sheets. At this the terrified baboo in charge of the telegraph instrument below sent the following laconic message [...]: "Lion fighting with station. Send urgent succour." Fortunately, he was not victorious in his "fight with the station"; Another night, however, he succeeded in carrying off the native driver of the pumping-engine. (282-283)

In all these scenes, barriers and structures built for or by Europeans are shown to be predator-safe. The lions cannot enter the Europeans’ bomas and they cannot

penetrate objects pertaining to the railroad. In the case of the station building, European construction technology (the corrugated-iron sheets of the roof) proves insurmountable, in the case of the train wagon, European construction and weapon technology (the report of the gun “increased a hundredfold by the reverberation of the hollow iron roof”) effectively align in repelling the predators.

In his description of the attack on the station, the protagonist-narrator does not only describe the sanctuary provided to natives by the European structure but also the fatal consequences of leaving this sphere of protection: the native is eaten. In the case of the bomas, the dynamics are different: After protests, the corrals are extended to enclose the entire camp. Concentric barricades are erected, the protagonist-narrator and Dr. Brock are stationed in the center and the workmen are located in the outer circles. The lions, however, overcome the outer barriers and kill one Indian workman after the other (cf. 65-68), whereas Europeans are not attacked while inside the bomas. The racial selectivity of the lions is striking and the following graphic description of the aftermath of an attack on a Swahili porter, delivered by the protagonist-narrator, creates the impression that the bomas are selective as well:

They found him stuck fast in the bushes of the boma, through which for once the lion had apparently been unable to drag him. He was still alive when I saw him next morning. (70)

In another scene, a British officer, accompanied by his non-European manservant, is attacked by the lions, they kill the servant, not the officer, and the protagonist-narrator cares to mention and translate his last words: “All that the poor fellow could say was: “Eh, Bwana, simba” (“Oh, Master, a lion)” (79), thus directly thematizes colonial hierarchy in the context of predation. Throughout the titular narrative, only non-Europeans are killed by the lions and are sometimes used as bait, in this case explicitly called “bait-sepoys” (81) by the protagonist-narrator, who also ironically comments on their attempts of protecting themselves:

Every good-sized tree in the camp had as many beds lashed on to it as its branches would bear—and sometimes more. I remember that one night when the camp was attacked, so many men swarmed on to one particular tree that down it came with a crash, hurling its terror-stricken load of shrieking coolies close to the very lions they

were trying to avoid. Fortunately for them, a victim had already been secured, and the brutes were too busy devouring him to pay attention to anything else. (73-74)

The theme of vertical distance between predators and humans pervades the narrative. The protagonist-narrator's standard mode of stalking the lions is climbing a tree or a platform to keep watch for them:

I was followed to my perch by a few of the more terrified coolies, who begged to be allowed to sit up in the tree with me (24)

In both scenes, vertical distance is denied to Indians. In the first, they are ridiculed in their unsuccessful attempt of climbing a tree, in the second, they are not allowed to ascend on their own. In the foreword, by comment of F.C. Selous, the fragility of the elevation concept is thematized, however regarding the author, not the Indian servants his protagonist-narrator describes:

especially on that one occasion when whilst watching from a very light scaffolding, supported only by four rickety poles, he was himself stalked by one of the dread beasts.

Whereas Darwin finds no explicit mention and all of the speculations made above might be overly suspicious of racism and colonialist conceits, the prevalence of boundaries – both vertical and horizontal – and the racially selective protection they provide resp. do not provide might allow to interpret that the narrative has a Darwinist subtext, in which the theme of the species division, more so, the anxieties surrounding it, is conjoined with racial dynamics. The text shows all non-Europeans spatially closer to the animals and preferred by them as food source, whereas it shows Europeans capable of keeping distance, protected in their domain and not selected as prey. Thus, it might be argued, anxieties are externalized and an implicit double-comment is made on both species and racial divide as to who is hierarchically situated above whom and who is biologically closer to whom, fortifying notions of ontological and colonial superiority via the dynamics of predation.

6.4 Animal kingdom and Empire

Built between 1896 and 1901, during the so-called 'Scramble for Africa', a period signified by the rivalry of European colonial powers over African territory and resources, the Uganda Railway was a strategic project of the British Empire (cf. Otte, 8), providing the infrastructure to expand and ensure British domination over the African Great Lakes region (cf. Ogonda & Onyango 223-4). The British recruited over 35.000 Indian laborers for the construction works, many of whom lost their lives or were injured in the course of the project. Greenwood and Topiwala (cf.57) state that over 20% of the workers returned as invalids and around 8% died on duty. The railroad also took a heavy toll on the British budget and caused political controversy⁴⁷.

The Uganda Railway is a central theme of Patterson's texts. The titular narrative begins in Mombasa, the starting point of the line, where the protagonist-narrator boards a train and travels along the already finished section of the railroad. The protagonist-narrator describes the different landscapes the railroad traverses and lists the native tribes that inhabit them as well as the animals that can be seen from the train windows, including an ostrich, which is seen running parallel to the train, a scene which will be discussed in detail in the last chapter of this analysis (cf. 12-16). The protagonist-narrator's final destination is Tsavo, where track-laying is in progress. The place is characterized as a hostile wilderness:

My first impression on coming out of my hut was that I was hemmed in on all sides by a dense growth of impenetrable jungle: and on scrambling to the top of a little hill close at hand, I found that the whole country [...] was covered with low, stunted trees, thick undergrowth and "wait-a-bit" thorns. The only clearing, indeed, appeared to be where the narrow track for the railway had been cut. This interminable nyika, or wilderness of whitish and leafless dwarf trees, presented a ghastly and sun-stricken appearance; and here and there a ridge of dark-red heat-blistered rock jutted out above the jungle, and added by its rugged barrenness to the dreariness of the picture. (16-17)

The image shows the railroad in penetration of the formerly impenetrable: the tracks cut through the thorn jungle. On a symbolical level, the clearing of the shrubs can be interpreted as a metaphor of technological or, more generally, civilizational progress

⁴⁷ According to Miller (286), contemporary critical voices commonly referred to the railroad as *Lunatic line*, a term that reportedly goes back to a newspaper poem satirizing the project.

that cannot be stopped by the “wait-a-bit”-obstacles nature puts in its way. The transformation of the ‘wilderness’ is overseen by the protagonist-narrator, who immediately after his arrival organizes labor and speeds up construction (cf. 19), industriously enacting the British colonialist agenda. The lions, however, “literally [stop] the British Empire in its tracks”, as Grande (289) puts it. Their first appearance is dramatically announced:

Two most voracious and insatiable man-eating lions appeared upon the scene, and for over nine months waged an intermittent warfare against the railway and all those connected with it in the vicinity of Tsavo. This culminated in a perfect reign of terror in December, 1898, when they actually succeeded in bringing the railway works to a complete standstill for about three weeks. (20)

The passage, one of the few examples of anthropomorphic representation, frames the animals as enemies of the British expansion project. Their predation on the railroad workers is characterized as a war against the railway and the disruptions caused by the animals’ attacks are subsumed as a “reign of terror”, however, the lions’ reign is only a short interregnum of “about three weeks” as the protagonist-narrator points out. Apart from showing the predators’ attacks on the workers, the titular narrative and following texts illustrate the animals’ hostility towards the railroad in scenes in which the lions directly target objects pertaining to it, such as wagons (cf. 39-40) or station buildings (282). Predator attacks on objects pertaining to the railroad illustrate the physical dimension of the animal’s enmity to the project. At the end of the titular story, a British lord is quoted, who characterizes the lion pair that “conceived a most unfortunate taste for our [the Indian] porters” as serious hindrance for the British enterprise (cf. 104), further underlining their status as enemies of the railway, if not the Empire.

The narrative’s emphasis on the cultural impact of the lions’ actions makes them appear as history-making agents. Kean describes Greyfriar’s bobby, the famously loyal dog who is said to have grieved at the grave of his deceased master for several years, as an animal that created a story through its own actions, elevating the human status of its owner through its culturally celebrated loyalty (cf. 41). In Patterson’s narrative, the lions’ ferocious predatory acts elevate the status of their killer. The killing of the

lions' is shown to greatly impress the Indian laborers. They award the protagonist-narrator with a trophy, signed with "Your grateful servants" (104) and call him "blessed one" (91) or "savior" (98). The titular narrative ends with the narratorial statement: "Well had the two man-eaters earned all their fame" (106), which might be interpreted as an ironic comment, given that in the book it is followed by an insert of a historical newspaper article, in which real-life Patterson is celebrated as hero and deliverer in the succession of Hercules, the lion killer and St. George, the dragon slayer (cf. 106), illustrating the fame of the hunter rather than that of the animals.

Ritvo analyzes the dynamics of political power and control over animals:

Controlling animals in nineteenth-century Britain gave people in an exploitative culture an indirect way to enact domination without overtly professing it. Thus, the animal kingdom (that standard phrase was itself part of the metaphor) was generally compared to the lesser ranks of a domestic commonwealth. (quoted in Rohman, 7)

Analogous dynamics can be observed in TMOT, which orchestrates the killing of the lions as an effective show of imperialist force that transcends the species boundary: The European officer heroically dispatches the animal enemy of his fearful non-European subordinates and they repay him with obedience and loyalty, or, in abstract terms: imperialist-colonialist dominance over human subjects is vicariously asserted through the exertion of control over animals. A similar show of force ends a revolt of the laborers (cf. 53-59): Confronted by the Indian workers, the protagonist-narrator jumps on a rock, shouts at the workers in Hindustani and fires his rifle over their heads, as if he were trying to scare off animals. The protagonist-narrator describes the faces of the men threatening him as "evil and murderous-looking" (58) and calls them "brutes", the same term he frequently uses in reference to the lions. More subtle strategies of animalization can arguably be identified in his structural analysis of the worker revolt. He diagnoses that it is only "one or two scoundrels among them who had induced them to behave so stupidly" (59), implicitly likening the instigators of the revolt to the two feline 'troublemakers'. The revolt is ended by military intervention but "trouble with the workmen", as the chapter describing the uprising is titled, continues in the form of desertion, which only stops after the killing of the first lion. The 'taming'

of the beast(s), to which the text suggestively likens the workers, causes them to fall in line.

In the beginning of the story, the protagonist-narrator states that the Indian workers believe the lions to be the “angry spirits of two departed native chiefs [that] had taken this form in order to protest against a railway being made through their country” (21). The passage could be interpreted as a veiled historical contextualization, pointing towards the Nandi resistance. For eleven years, Koitalel Arap Samoei, supreme chief of the Nandi people of Kenya, led a resistance movement against the Uganda Railway, which ended in 1906, shortly after his assassination by British soldier Richard Meinertzhagen, who lured Koitalel into a trap, pretending that he wanted to negotiate a truce (cf. Mangat). From this perspective, the narrative might be alluding to real-life human-human conflict, the explicit mention of which it omits, by presenting it in the guise of an animal-themed phantasm of non-Europeans, in doing so arguably othering them as irrational and superstitious people. Another animal-themed historical allusion can possibly be identified in a metaphorical passage, describing the railway as a “shining snake” (146). According to Muriuki (cf. 137), a Kikuyu seer prophesized the invasion of the British, describing them as people who would look like “small white frogs”, wearing butterfly dresses, carrying “sticks that spit fire”, and who would bring an “iron snake, belching fire while traveling between the big waters of the east and west”. Against the background of this prophecy, regardless if anecdotal or not, TMOT can be read as an animal attack story featuring not two feline but one ferrous antagonist.

6.5 Ecocritical aspects

Patterson’s texts take considerable interest in African fauna. In chapter 18, a short episode describing a lion hunt, the protagonist-narrator presents a panorama of local wildlife:

The great feature of the undulating plains, however, and the one which gives them a never-failing interest, is the great abundance of game of almost every conceivable kind. Here I myself have seen lion, rhinoceros, leopard, eland, giraffe, zebra, wildebeeste, hartebeeste, waterbuck, wart-hog, Granti, Thomsoni, impala, besides ostriches, greater and lesser bustard, marabout, and a host of other animals and birds too

numerous to name; while along the Athi and close to its banks may be found large numbers of hippo and crocodiles. (190-191)

The narrator refers to the animals as game, a hunting term describing “wild animals hunted for sport or food” (cf. Merriam-Webster). In the context of trophy hunting, which is a dominant theme in several of the book’s texts, the extensive enumeration of animals can be interpreted as not only a documentation of biological diversity but as a presentation of attractive target objects for hunters arranged in the style of a shooting gallery. The list contains four of the so-called “big five”, a term originally referring to lion, leopard, rhinoceros, elephant and buffalo as the African animals most difficult to hunt but today used mainly in Safari marketing (cf. Nelson 2010). Wilbert views “heroic narratives of British colonialists like J.H. Patterson and others such as Jim Corbett” and the popularity they enjoyed as “aspects of the cult of trophy hunting – so widespread in the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth century” (34). The trophy cult was not limited to individual, ‘recreational’ hunting but included large-scale expeditions aiming at collecting specimens for scientific purposes, such as the Smithsonian-Roosevelt African Expedition (1909-10), in the course of which over 11.000 animals were killed or trapped⁴⁸. In the first chapter of TMOT, the beginning of the titular narrative, the protagonist-narrator describes an act of trophy taking:

As our train sped onwards through the level uplands we saw a fine ostrich striding along parallel with the line, as if having a race with us. Dr. McCulloch at once seized his rifle and by a lucky shot brought down the huge bird; the next and greater difficulty, however, was to secure the prize. (13-14)

After the killing, the train is stopped and the body of the ostrich hauled in. The scene shows the narrative’s first encounter between humans and animals, for the latter it ends with death. Mangum, discussing narrative patterns of empire adventure fiction, states that:

Intriguingly, surreptitious scenes of animal violence in empire fiction are usually anticipated by hunts in which human characters confidently assume they sit securely at the head of the predatory hierarchy. (166)

⁴⁸ Cf. Smithsonian Institution Archives: “Roosevelt African Expedition Collects for SI”

The titular narrative is configured in the same way Mangum describes. The ostrich-scene at the beginning of the story shows human dominance over animals. Technology, the railroad, and nature, symbolized by the ostrich, are shown in a race decided by gunpowder, confirming a hierarchy in which humans occupy the top position. In the next chapter, the titular narrative inverts this hierarchy and presents the first of several violent scenes in which lions kill humans (cf. 21-24). In the course of the titular narrative, hierarchical order is restored and the bodies of the animal usurpers are converted into trophies. In chapter 9, the narrator describes the dead body of the second lion:

On examination we found no less than six bullet holes in the body, and embedded only a little way in the flesh of the back was the slug which I had fired into him from the scaffolding about ten days previously. He measured nine feet six inches from tip of nose to tip of tail, and stood three feet eleven and a half inches high; but, as in the case of his companion, the skin was disfigured by being deeply scored all over by the boma thorns. The news of the death of the second "devil" soon spread far and wide over the country, and natives actually travelled from up and down the line to have a look at my trophies and at the "devil-killer", as they called me. (102-103)

The effects of gunpowder weaponry are closely examined as is the animal's skin in regards to its quality as a trophy, similar to the examination of the first lion's skin immediately following the description of the act of killing, in which the protagonist-narrator finds it to be in unsatisfying condition, "blemished" by thorn marks (cf. 93). Nonetheless, the protagonist-narrator points out that the trophies attract the attention of the "natives", who travel "from up and down the line" to view them, emphasizing both the triumph of hunter and railroad. The theme of trophy taking appears in several other episodes, such as in chapter 12, a hunting episode, where the protagonist-narrator states: "I was especially anxious to bag a hippopotamus" (131), or in chapter 14, another hunting episode including a snake attack, where he brags about the killing of an antelope: "my unlucky friends were very much astonished when they saw the fine bag I had secured in so short a time" (162). The hunting jargon mirrors the treatment of animals as objects on a semantic level: the hunter *bags* them as collectibles. In another hunting episode, the trophy taking is apparently accompanied by scruples. After having killed a zebra, the protagonist-narrator states:

This was the first time I had seen these beautifully marked animals in their wild state, so I selected the largest and fired, and as I was quite close to them he dropped in his tracks stone-dead. When I stood over the handsome creature I was positively sorry for having killed him. Not so Mootah, however, who rushed up in ecstasy, and before I could stop him had cut his throat. (156-157)

The protagonist-narrator goes on to describe his annoyance with the religious practice of bloodletting, performed on the animal by his Muslim manservant, thus spoiling the trophy. While the killing itself is not depicted in graphic detail, the preparation of the animals' body is shown as a violent act. The scene can be viewed as a racist-culturalist juxtaposition, contrasting the restraint and compassion of the 'noble' white hunter to the savagery of his non-white subordinate. The latter is othered as uncivilized subaltern, 'remote-controlled' by the primitive urges of instinct and the commands of religion, while the former is highlighted as civilized superior, self-controlled and self-aware. The ability to exercise self-control and to keep one's 'primal urges' in check was a core desideratum of the British hunting ethos. Gillespie, examining the colonial hunting discourse of 19th century Britain, states that:

Some [imperialists] expressed fear that the British hunters might abandon civilized social conduct in the colonial wilderness. They believed the ritual of hunting [...] unleashed primal urges in civilized men. [...] By the mid-to late nineteenth century, restraint and self-control evolved into the cardinal virtues of the imperial hunting cult. British hunters displayed their character and moral fibre through a test of their rational restraint. (41)

The protagonist-narrator's control over others, rather than self-control, are at the center of the following scene of the titular narrative:

A little paa—a kind of very small antelope—sprang out and found itself suddenly in the midst of a gang of coolies. Terrified and confused by the shouting of the men, it ran straight at Shere Shah, the jemadar, who promptly dropped a basket over it and held it fast. I happened to arrive just in time to save the graceful little animal's life, and took it home to my camp, where it very soon became a great pet. Indeed, it grew so tame that it would jump upon my table at meal times and eat from my hand. (46)

Similar to the passage discussed above, the behavior of the protagonist-narrator is contrasted to that of the Indian workmen. While the latter are shown as harassers of the "graceful little animal", the former is portrayed as the merciful savior of the creature,

which 'repays' him by turning into a "great pet". It could be argued that in this scene, the 'primal urges' of the British hunter, as mentioned by Gillespie, are externalized and projected onto the colonial subjects. Accordingly, instead of having to exercise self-control, the protagonist-narrator shows his ethical superiority by exerting control over his human subordinates and in doing so gains control over a new animal subordinate, "eating from [his] hand". Ayres, in reference to Ritvo's discussion of zookeeping and its relation to imperialism, states that "the British [...] took pride in their taming of beasts, as tribute to their colonizing of exotic animals, human and nonhuman alike" (35). Arguably, the above passage illustrates an act of such 'double-domestication'. Gillespie states that "imperialists in Great Britain viewed the removal of large predatory animals as crucial to the initial stages of appropriation" (41). In *TMOT*, several predatory species are regarded as pests. Leopards, for instance, are vilified as vicious animals, "killing simply for pleasure and not for food" (113). A similar characterization can be found in the ninth edition of the *Britannica* (1882), where the leopard is described as an "animal that often kills many more victims than it can devour at once, apparently to gratify its propensity for killing". African wild dogs are another species the protagonist-narrator portrays in unfavorable terms, describing them as "very destructive" harassers of "poor creature[s] of the wild" (cf. the harassment of the poor antelope by the Indian workers!) that will "attack anything" (114), yet wishing to obtain one of them as a trophy (cf. 115). In contrast, the harassment of animals by human hunters is not discussed. Apart from being framed as villains, these species are also described as an economic nuisance, compromising livestock farming (cf. 112-114). Up to the present day, depredation on domestic animals is a central problem in the relationship between humans and nonhuman predators. Inskip and Zimmermann (cf. 21-23) point it out as the most commonly reported aspect of human-felid conflict. Sommerville regards poaching, retaliatory killings in the context of livestock depredation and territorial encroachment as central threats for the real world's remaining lion populations. From an ecological perspective, the human-felid conflict represented in the titular narrative can be viewed as a consequence of territorial encroachment. Thousands of workers are shown building a railroad through a sparsely populated "thorny wilderness" (45), inhabited – among many other animals – by the titular lions. The protagonist-narrator uses industrial imagery to describe the

transformation of the land, stating that “workmen and supplies came pouring in, and the noise of hammers and sledges, drilling and blasting echoed merrily through the district” (19) or that “each man simply flew to his particular work, and hammers and chisels resounded merrily and energetically, where all had been silence a moment before” (54). Apart from the ecological disruptions caused by the construction work, humans engage in large-scale hunts for herbivorous species, thus compromising the lion’s food source. Faced with predatorial competition, the animals adapt and turn towards human prey, which presents itself in abundance. The titular narrative, however, does not engage in ecological reflections. Anthropogenic causes of the conflict are not discussed. Instead, the titular narrative presents humans and lions in an environment that apparently cannot be inhabited by both. Wilbert, referring to narratives in the likes of TMOT, states:

These older narratives take place on the margins of empire and may be seen to be about subduing and controlling nature, of seeking to order spaces and environments according to dominant Western views – which implicitly meant spaces that could not be shared with large carnivores. (34)

In TMOT coexistence is never discussed as an option. The only resolution of the conflict is the killing of the lions. Based on Evans’ (2018, cf. 42) numbers, death of the felids appears to be the most likely outcome of human-lion conflict in real life as well. From 1.2 million in the 1880ies, lion numbers in Africa have been reduced to an estimated 20.000. In India, about 500 lions survive in the wild, where – as Evans (2018, 42) states – “they had once existed in their hundreds of thousands”.

7 The Birds

First published 1952 in the collection *The Apple Tree: A Short Novel and Some Stories*, Daphne du Maurier's *The Birds*, called a masterpiece by her publisher Gollancz (cf. Bellanca, 26), is a short story set in rural Cornwall shortly after the end of the Second World War. The text presents a horror scenario at the center of which large flocks of birds terrorize a seaside farming community. The first scene of the story shows the protagonist Nat Hocken, a disabled war veteran, watching birds amidst an idyllic autumnal scenery when suddenly winter invades. Nat withdraws to his family home, where he and his children are attacked by a flock of small birds. Worried, he tells his neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Trigg and their farmhand Jim, the only other characters of the story, about the birds' unusual behavior but they brush off his concerns. The animals' attacks continue and become increasingly violent. Radio announcements report unusual bird aggression across the country and it gradually becomes clear that the birds pose a serious threat. Faced with a large-scale invasion of hostile birds, the characters try to take counter measures and find themselves in a struggle for survival. When the radio broadcasts reporting on the situation suddenly stop, indicating that the birds are wreaking havoc in the entire country, if not the world, Nat and his family withdraw to their fortified house, where the narrative closes with the birds clawing at the door.

Du Maurier's horror story presents a monstrous case of animal-human conflict, in the course of which an entire class of the animal kingdom, the titular birds, turns against mankind. According to Maunder (cf. 128), the text was inspired by du Maurier "seeing a farmer being attacked by a flock of seagulls", causing her to expand on this incident and devise her animal attack narrative. While this might be a mere anecdote, *The Birds* shows a keen interest in the avian fauna. The text's detailed representation of the birds and their aggressive behavior provides fertile grounds for a biocentric analysis. In the following, the narrative's portrayal of antagonistic animals will be examined with special focus on aspects of ethological verisimilitude, monstrosity and animal agency. Furthermore, several of the text's animal-related symbolic aspects will be explored, followed by an ecocritical analysis.

7.1 Cultural and historical context

Du Maurier's text – as will be discussed – shows humans and animals fundamentally alienated from each other. Berger discusses historical tendencies of alienation in the human-animal relationship. He states that the 20th century, through corporate capitalism, saw the completion of a process, "by which every tradition which has previously mediated between man and nature was broken" (3). He notes that animals have disappeared from everyday life and have been marginalized (cf. 26-28). Discussing the exhibition of animals in zoos, he states that "everywhere animals disappear. In zoos they constitute the living monument to their own disappearance" (26) and goes on to describe the loss of a reciprocal, connecting look hitherto exchanged between animals and humans as a consequence of animal marginalization and confinement:

At the most, the animal's gaze flickers and passes on. They look blindly beyond. [...] They have been immunized to encounter [...] Therein lies the ultimate consequence of their marginalization. That look between animal and man [...] with which [...] all men had always lived until less than a century ago, has been extinguished. (28)

Berger views the commercial exploitation of animals as raw materials (cf. 12-14) as a central factor contributing to the alienation process. In the early decades of the 20th century, industrialized countries began to adopt new methods of livestock production, which lead to significant increases of agricultural output (cf. Scully, 29). Modern intensive chicken farming started in the 1930ies, following the development of nutritional supplements which facilitated indoor-raising (cf. Gordon 52-67). The Agriculture Act of 1947, granting subsidies to farmers to encourage them to implement new technologies and thus increase productivity, effectively ushered in the era of factory farming in Great Britain (cf. Williams 156-160). Russel of the *Financial Times* describes a 1953 chicken farm in the middle of the English countryside:

Huge fans regulate the atmosphere and the light is kept dim. The air is warm, musty and faintly putrid. On the ground, covering every inch, are about 1,600 "broiler" chickens. This shifting, shuffling sea of feathers marks the start of a quiet revolution in farming.

Apart from industrial rearing and slaughter, the UK saw other forms of mass animal killings. In 1939, in the course of the so-called *British Pet Massacre*, a preemptive government measure to prepare for potential food shortages, over 750.000 companion animals were killed (cf. Campbell). Du Maurier's text, as will be examined, presents an inversion of such scenarios: humans, forced to seek shelter in their houses and thus effectively encaged, are preyed upon by an ever-growing number of birds.

In contrast to the agricultural developments outlined above, growing concern for animal welfare and conservation led to the foundation of such movements as the *Vegan Society of Britain* in 1944 (cf. Lenemann) or the *American Wilderness Society* in 1935, which defines itself as "an organization of spirited people who will fight for the freedom and preservation of the wilderness"⁴⁹. In 1949, Aldo Leopold, a founding member of the *Wilderness Society*, published his book *The Sand County Almanac*, which according to Sax significantly influenced ecological perspectives on animals (cf. 39). Ten years after the publication of *The Birds*, Rachel Carson's ecocritical text *Silent Spring* drew attention to environmental destruction and is seen by some as one of the starting points of worldwide environmentalist movements (cf. Simon, 156), which according to Sax (39) rapidly grew in number in the 1960ies. The 1950ies brought forth films about irradiated monsters like *Godzilla* (1954) or *Them!* (1954), which can be contextualized with the Cold War but can also be viewed as pop-cultural reflections of growing public attention to environmental concerns. Furthermore, they can be seen as precursors or, perhaps, early examples of eco-horror. Du Maurier's narrative touches on several environmental issues and focuses on the theme of monstrous nature, aspects which will be discussed in the course of the following analysis.

In the literary domain, several 20th century texts preceding *The Birds* represent birds as antagonists, such as Melville Davisson's 1927 *The Revolt of the Birds* or Philip MacDonald's 1931 deceptively titled *Our Feathered Friends*, in which birds tear apart a love couple, as well as Frank Baker's 1936 novel *The Birds*, which according to Bellanca is closer to Hitchcock's 1963 film of the same name than du Maurier's text, which is more commonly credited as the film's literary source. Bellanca states that Hitchcock's film, not the literary source(s):

⁴⁹ <https://www.wilderness.org/about-us/our-team/our-history>

gets the credit for the wide-spread recognition of the earlier narrative's central idea: birds become both agent and symbol of apocalyptic disaster, a cataclysmic reversal in which the earth's top predators become the prey. (26)

She views du Maurier's and Baker's texts in the tradition of "catastrophist" fiction, which according to her emerged between the world wars, which according to Stableford, as quoted by Bellanca, is a distinctive element of 20th century English *volksgeist* (cf. Bellanca, 32).

7.2 Avian predators – fact & fiction

Du Maurier's story undermines the common presupposition that birds do not prey upon humans and confronts readers with a horrifying reversal of the pecking order. In her essay on the monstrosity of predation in *The Birds*, Bellanca (28) succinctly expresses the text's subversive appeal in a rhetorical question: "People kill birds, after all, but birds don't kill people. Or do they?"

She examines the narrative's "bad guys" (27) from a biocentric viewpoint and looks at them as actual animals with a specific focus on the aspect of predation. Relating to recent paleontological findings that suggest our hominid ancestors were regularly preyed upon by birds, she states that du Maurier's text may tap into "a primal anxiety about animals that are equipped by nature with built-in tools – sharp beaks and tearing claws – against which individual humans have little defense" (27) and speculates that this fear might have found its expression in culturally omnipresent myths of winged monsters bringing death from above. Ornithologist Steve Goodman (quoted in Hart and Sussmann, 149) investigates myths of man-eating birds from a zoological perspective. He identifies *Stephanoaetus maher*, the Malagasy crowned hawk-eagle (extinct around 1500 AD) as possible real-life inspiration for the legend of the Roc or Rokh, a giant bird of prey of Middle-Eastern lore. In Marco Polo's *The Travels of Marco Polo*, he is described as:

so big in fact that its wings covered an extent of 30 paces, and its quills were 12 paces long, and thick in proportion. And it is so strong that it will seize an elephant in its talons and carry him high into the air, and drop him so that he is smashed to pieces; having

so killed him the bird gryphon swoops down on him and eats him at leisure. (Marco Polo, Book III/ Chapter XXXIII)

While certainly not capable of such feats, the large bird is believed to have been able to take down adult humans, who, according to Hart and Sussmann (149-150), nonetheless brought about its extinction around 1500 CE. Another impressive raptor, Haast's eagle, *Hieraaetus moorei*, once native to New Zealand and gone extinct around 1400 (cf. Perry et al., 2014, 126-135), is also believed to have posed a threat to humans (cf. Eveleth). While it is unclear if Haast's eagle actively hunted *homo sapiens*, it was capable of taking down very large prey. With a wingspan of over three meters and a weight of up to 15 kg, the species was the main predator of the equally extinct Moa, an ostrich-like bird weighing up to 230 kg (cf. Brathwaite 239-247). Zoologists Hart and Sussmann (cf. 138-147) posit that eagles and hawks are the most prolific hunters of non-human primates. They state that the larger species regularly prey on bonobos and baboons, which are not dissimilar in size and proportion to sub-adult humans. They report a scientifically authenticated incident from Zambia, where an immature crowned eagle attempted to prey on a seven year old schoolboy, leaving the child with severe injuries before an adult woman came to the boy's aid and killed the bird: "an eagle swooped down from a tree onto him [the child], ripping open gashes in his head, arms, and chest (he was wearing a khaki school uniform that probably saved him from fatal injuries)" (137).

Hart and Sussmann go on to recount a bird attack suffered by ornithologist Leslie Brown. A female crowned hawk-eagle attacked Brown while the latter was monitoring her nests. The talons left "three half-inch-wide ropery scars spread about 8 inches apart on his [Brown's] back [...]. Brown describes the attack as having felt "like a crushing blow from a heavy stick" (148-149). A famous child specimen of our hominid ancestral species *Australopithecus africanus* did not get to live and tell an animal attack tale. The fossils of the so called *Taung child*, discovered by paleoanthropologist Raymond Dart, are widely recognized as compelling evidence of successful raptor predation on hominids. The skeletal remains of the child, which was most likely between 3 and 4 years old at the time of death, exhibit patterns of bone damage consistent with those found on non-human primates killed by large raptors, including "nicks, punctures and "can opener" perforations on thin bones such as the skull and pelvis, plus heavy raking

and shattering of shoulder blades” (cf. Hart and Sussmann, 153.) Hart and Sussmann explain the “can opener” marks as a consequence of raptorial feeding practices. In their attempt to reach the brain, a preferred organ because of its high protein content, raptors carve through the relatively thin facial bones with their talons and cut the lower skull open like a tin can (153).

Du Maurier’s text does not show such predatory techniques, nor does it feature large birds of prey. The narrative starts out with small birds and focusses on pecking as the birds’ main method of attack. In the first scene of physical contact between humans and their avian antagonists, the main character Nat is injured by an unspecified bird:

He heard a tapping on the window. [...] He opened it, and as he did so something brushed his hand, jabbing at his knuckles, grazing his skin [...] feeling his knuckles wet [he] put his mouth to the scratch. The bird had drawn blood. (87)

No details about the animal’s physique are revealed, therefore it remains unclear with which body part the injury was inflicted, the term “jabbing”, however, points towards the beak. Immediately after this incident, a group of birds fly “straight into [Nat’s] face” (88). The narrative offers details on the animals’ method of attack via character comment: Nat declares to his disbelieving wife that the birds tried to peck his eyes. A few moments later, the animals return and target the couple’s children. Nat tries to defend them and is harassed by an entire flock. They surround him and perform dive maneuvers, “the birds rose and dived” (88) and aim at his head, forcing him to cover himself with a blanket. The animals go on to attack his exposed extremities with their beaks: “Some had lost feathers in the fight, others had blood, his blood, upon their beaks” (89). After the fight, the narrative discloses the species involved in the attack. All of them are small-sized songbirds, such as robins or blue tits. Another sequence featuring detailed descriptions of attacking behavior involves black-backed gulls, the largest members of the gull family with a wingspan up to 1.7 meters (cf. Sibley 483). The narrative shows the birds carrying out repeated nosedive attacks against the protagonist: “[The birds] dived down at him from the sky, missed, swerved in flight, and rose to dive again” (103-104). Similar to the patterns described by Hart and Sussmann’s real-life accounts, the attacks focus on Nat’s extremities, head and upper

torso, causing lacerations: "He could feel the blood on his hands, his wrists, his neck. Each stab of a swooping beak tore his flesh" (104).

The sequence also describes suicidal maneuvers, carried out by several species, among them large seabirds, in which the animals do not actively attack with their beaks but instead retract their wings, let themselves fall and effectively turn into bombs: "Now and again came a thud, a crash, as some bird dived and fell. "Some of them will kill themselves that way", [Nat] thought" (105). While flocks of birds falling from the sky is a fairly common and scientifically authenticated phenomenon (cf. Lederer) that has been linked to reasons such as lightning, noise, poisoning or collision (cf. Choi), researchers debate whether suicide in animals exists to this day (cf. Hogenboom).

Apart from showing attacks on humans, the narrative features several descriptions of object-directed aggression. Trying to enter the protagonist's barricaded house, the animals smash themselves against walls and boarded windows (cf. 116). Introduced in the final stages of the story, birds of prey, the largest of them a buzzard, concentrate their attacks on the door and claw at it with their talons (cf. 122-123). Birds are known to attack objects and have been observed to do so with significant tenacity. Rees recounts an experiment conducted by ethologists Tinbergen and Lack, using a bird-shaped dummy to test real birds' responses to a stranger. One specimen violently attacked the object and after having removed its head, long continued until the dummy was completely dismantled, which Tinbergen and Lack interpreted as an act of anti-rival aggression.

While du Maurier's narrative features several detailed and partially verisimilar representations of the birds' attacking behavior, it neither shows the animals' aggressions in ethologically relatable contexts nor connects them with plausible motives, thus impeding behavioral classification. The text continuously provides readers with clues regarding the birds' global mission, the destruction of mankind, but does not allow conclusive ethological readings of the individual human-non-human encounters. Do the birds act in protection of territory? Do they perceive humans as rivals? Do they want to feed on them? None of these questions find answers due to the story's narrative ambiguity. Employing techniques of non- or partial disclosure, the text provides compelling evidence that the birds kill people but omits any explicit display of the actual killing. Towards the end of the story, the protagonist and his wife

discover the bodies of their neighbors, the Triggs and their farmhand Jim, whose corpse is described in gruesome detail: “Jim’s body lay in the yard...what was left of it” (119). The text does not allow any other conclusion than that it was the birds who killed and ate the people on the farm, but it does not disclose any information as to how and why the killings happened. It remains unclear if the human characters were actively hunted, killed and eaten as prey in the course of purposeful predation or if the anthropophagic/necrophagic behavior is just a side effect of non-predatory, yet lethal attacks. While real-life birds are known to feed on human remains as scavengers (cf. Giordano et. al.) and some species – as has been shown- are documented to attempt predation on humans, Bellanca (28) states that “large-scale, multi-species attacks on humans are [...] unheard of”. Large scale bird ‘invasions’ not involving attacks, however, have been the subject of sensationalist media reports. Tim Ghianni of Reuters, for instance, reports that “millions of birds have descended on a small Kentucky city” in the winter of 2012/2013. Emma Kirby of the BBC reports that in the winter of 2019 the inhabitants of Stromness, Orkney, were “fighting a goose invasion with guns, knives and forks”. According to Soles (528-529), Hitchcock’s film adaptation of *The Birds* was partially inspired by a 1962 news article on a bird invasion in Santa Cruz/California.

Unlike the media reports quoted above, du Maurier’s text does not foreground spectacle in its representation of bird attacks. While enjoying the creative license of the horror genre and thus not being subjected to standards of ethological verisimilitude, the narrative nonetheless faces the task of making readers willingly suspend their disbelief when it confronts them with an army of birds as antagonists. Leaving aside biologically implausible aspects such as the animals’ extensive interspecies cooperation or their unlikely choice of target, the text offers a relatively life-like, non-sensationalist representation of their attacking behavior, however implausible the scenario as a whole might be. The birds neither tear off limbs nor slice throats but fight their human opponents within the limits of their individual physical capabilities.

7.3 Aspects of horror and monstrosity

Although the narrative's representation of the birds' physique and attacking behavior might not foreground monstrosity, Lutwack (242) compares the animal antagonists of *The Birds* to mythological birds and bird-like creatures such as Harpies and Furies, referring to them as "world destroying" animals. He specifically focuses on the Stymphalian birds, which, according to Greek legend, regularly rose from the marshes in swarms and destroyed livestock and people with their sharp beaks, metallic feathers and poisonous feces. Regarding potentially fear-inducing aspects of real birds and their reflection in mythology, he states that "ancient myths make use of the fact that there is something preternaturally terrifying about the wild beating of wings about the heads of people". In an early fight scene, du Maurier's narrative shows the protagonist engulfed in a sensation similar to what Lutwack describes: Nat is surrounded by a "fluttering, whirring of wings" (89). In a later scene, a flock of birds harasses Nat and keeps "coming at him from the air, silent save for the beating wings. The terrible, fluttering wings" (104). The readers mainly experience the diegetic universe through Nat's sensorium, the world is seen through his eyes and heard through his ears. In the early attack scene quoted above, the narrative shows him deprived of his vision with a blanket wrapped around his head, trying to protect his eyes from a swarm of birds. Focusing on isolated sensory impressions, such as the fluttering of wings or the pain of being pecked at, the narrative simultaneously reflects Nat's disorientation and creates immediacy of experience between protagonist and readers, who are not granted a bird's eye view of the incident but instead are forced to piece together Nat's fragmentary sensations. Likewise, the scene presents the birds as fragments. They are synecdochally reduced to individual body parts such as wings, talons and beaks or are metonymically disembodied and turn into a fluttering, a whirring or a pecking (cf. 89). After the fight scene, the tropically dissected birds are patched up again into complete anatomies: "Nat gazed at the little corpses, shocked and horrified [...] There were robins, finches, sparrows, blue tits, larks and bramblings" (89). Wisker examines du Maurier's horror fiction and states that *The Birds* is a "chilling example of body

horror; and disgust at the invasion of the abject⁵⁰ (24). While her notion focuses on the invasion of human bodies or bodily space, expressed in pecking and stabbing or – more drastically – the animals’ anthropophagic behavior, the fractal representation of corporeality in the scene discussed above can be interpreted as narrative technique aimed at causing responses of disgust in connection to the animal bodies themselves. Wisker discusses the abject in regards to animal physique and behavior. She states that:

The abject [...] is central to *The Birds*. [...] wings, feathers and beaks are disgusting qualities of the beast which overwhelm and engulf, undermining the space of the self, the individual’s sense of identity and safe normality. The film of *The Birds* (Hitchcock, 1963) capitalizes on the terror inspired by the familiar turning against us. (25)

In her reading of both story and film, disgust is effectuated by specific body parts of the birds, such as wings and beaks, while behavioral abnormalities cause unease. “Safe normality” is threatened by the attacks of creatures commonly known as harmless, such as the exhaustively named songbirds, in Bellanca’s terms “familiar garden varieties” (29), in the scene discussed above. Wisker states that “Our sense of security as readers is disturbed, what we take for granted in the world of our own, others’ and animal behaviour destabilized” (24). Bellanca, in reference to Alaimo⁵¹, discusses the birds in du Maurier’s story as “monstrous natures”. She contrasts the birds’ physiognomy to their behavior:

In “The Birds”, however, the monsters are not outsized creatures [...], genetically engineered experiments gone awry, but normal-bodied animals that enact monstrous behavior, a stunning affront to humans’ understanding of their fellow creatures. (27)

Similar to Wisker’s notion, Bellanca claims that much of the story’s terrifying effect arises from the fact that it uses animals “not generally a threat in modern-day Europe” as antagonists, adding the “shock of betrayal to the characters’ bewilderment”, thus

⁵⁰Wisker refers to Kristeva’s notion of the abject, developed in her 1980 essay *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*.

⁵¹ Alaimo (cf. 279-281) discusses the complex ramifications of the representation of animal monsters and villains in movies along the lines of vilification and eco-humility. She views the animals in *The Birds*⁵¹ as a conceptual iteration of what she calls “monstrous natures”, employed as agents of terror in nature-rebellion plots

subverting a traditional English “human-animal kinship narrative” that portrays birds as friendly, joyful creatures in the context of “companionable nature” (cf. 29). Du Maurier’s narrative shows all members of the avian class as hostile, in stark contrast to the popular notion of birds as “feathered songsters [...] whose lives are patterns of gaiety, cleanliness, alacrity and joy” (Smith and Knapp, quoted by Bellanca 29).

The birds’ collective antagonism constitutes another aspect of monstrosity grounded in behavioral abnormality. The attacks are not individual acts of aggression but are part of a large-scale, concerted operation with the apparent aim to exterminate mankind. The text shows the animals acting in extensive interspecies cooperation, highly unusual from an ethological perspective, and thus presents them as a quasi-military force of nature. Bellanca (cf. 39) reads *The Birds* in the tradition of nature-rebellion narratives that derive their unsettling impact from their questioning of human presumptions of having control over nature. Du Maurier’s narrative subverts the human self-conception as “chief primates” in charge (Wisker 24) – apart from relegating them in the food chain – by showing humans as disoriented, helpless individuals in a losing battle against a well-structured and effectively organized animal army with the monstrous objective of exterminating its enemy.

Regarding closure, Bellanca (28) points out that the story’s refusal to allow humans to emerge victorious in the end is in “contrast to present-day “monstrous nature” films”, she states that:

In “The Birds” there is no such victory, no rescue [...] via helicopter or superior weapons. [...] Like the excavation of a real-life pre-history in which hominids literally fell prey to birds, du Maurier’s fiction places *Homo sapiens* back in the web of predatory nature that we like to think we have risen above.

Wisker (22) regards du Maurier’s horror writing as especially unsettling regarding closure, claiming that “her [du Maurier’s] greater transgression and her unease trouble the ostensible closure of her narratives.” *The Birds* does not only show humans on the losing side, denying them triumph over Alaimo’s “monstrous natures” but refuses to “restore order and normality” (Wisker, 26). Perhaps even more unsettling regarding closure might be the narrative’s consequent refusal to offer readers any explanation as to why the birds attack, through which it creates a subversive parallel between their position and that of the confounded characters it shows them.

7.4 Animal agency, emotion, ethics and intelligence

The narrative's avian antagonists are mysterious killers. While they clearly have a mission, their motive remains unclear throughout the narrative. Their human targets consistently try to find out why the birds attack and in doing so become ethological detectives of a case in which they themselves are the victims. In the course of the narrative, they manage to infer that the animals have a murderous agenda. Soles (529) views the avian attack narrative as a demonstration of the "possibility that the birds are their own agents, exercising desire and bent on exacting revenge for the unspecified crimes of humanity". Non-human agency is an elusive concept, as Amanda Rees points out in her essay on animal agents. She marks self-consciousness, deliberation and reflection as traditional criteria by which human agency is differentiated from animal agency and questions the validity of these premises. Along with many other literary examples, she discusses Golding's 1955 *The Inheritors* as a "sustained novelistic attempt to imagine a nonhuman consciousness among Neanderthals [...] where ego is integrated at the community, rather than individual, level" and regards Golding's Neanderthals – although not self-conscious in the traditional anthropocentric sense – as "active subjects and agents making their own histories and influencing those of others."

The birds in du Maurier's text are certainly not as close to *homo sapiens* as are Golding's Neanderthals, yet suspicions and intimations of them possessing a consciousness, especially as a collective, surface in the narrative. Nat perceives the birds as "purposeful, intent" (85), the narrator further elaborates on the protagonist's impression and adds that "they knew where they were bound, the rhythm and ritual of their life brooked no delay." Narrator and main character seem to disagree on the question of animal agency. Nat's anthropomorphic observation points towards intentionality, whereas the narratorial description foregrounds instinct. A few lines later, Nat observes the birds agitatedly searching for food and compares their situation to that of humans, who have to make similar efforts in order to survive. He anthropocentrically envisions both animals and humans subjected to the logics of what he calls "work or folly" (86). In the context of the compulsions of labor, Rees cautions that the idealist notion of free will, a traditional hallmark of human agency, can easily

turn into a reifying abstraction “that creates disembodied human agents” and rhetorically asks “are you really free to work a zero-hours contract?”, a question which, perhaps, calls to mind a human compulsion similar to that expressed in Nat’s human-animal comparison.

Nat’s way of thinking about animals comes close to what de Waal (1999) and Rees defend as a lay attempt to understand animals and what in Rees’ view has long “been marginalised as [...] sloppy anthropomorphism”. His anthropomorphic and empathetic approach is in contrast to the narrator’s distanced stance, especially regarding aspects of animal emotion. While the protagonist seeks to explain an early, individual bird attack on himself by speculating about the animal’s emotional state, surmising that the birds must have been frightened and bewildered, seeking shelter (cf. 87), the narrator is primarily disinterested in the animals’ inner life and instead focuses on their anatomy and their movement. A huge flock of seagulls is described as completely silent, the animals are just “soaring and circling, rising and falling” (99). By portraying birds as mute, unable of expression, contrary to many traditional narratives’ portrayal of birds as lively communicators (cf. Bellanca 29), the narrator creates the impression that they are emotionless. Even when they feed, they are described as doing so “without hunger, without desires” (86), reminiscent of Descartes’ automata. There are inconsistencies in the narratorial characterization of the birds as dispassionate biorobots, however. During a prolonged fight scene, they are described to feel an “urge for battle” (89), indicating emotional impulses in connection with the attacks.

While the narrative mainly omits aspects of non-human emotion, human feelings receive marked attention with a focus on fear and anxiety. After a bird attack, Nat’s wife is “terrified, bewildered”, her face “garish”, Nat is “shaken” (90). Trying to understand the animals’ behavior, the characters project their own emotional state on the birds. When Nat’s wife declares that she is very scared because of the attacks, Nat, perturbed as well, explains to both her and himself that “it must have been fright that made them [the birds] act the way they did” (94). A psychological interpretation might argue that Nat subconsciously transfers his own repressed fear onto the animal other. A speculative psychological interpretation of another scene might argue that Nat also projects his ethics on the animals: In the aftermath of an attack, Nat inspects a

heap of dead animal bodies. He reasons, that if he were to shield his house with the bodies, which he later does, the birds might refrain from attacking:

He looked at the bodies of the birds, and he had a notion that if he heaped them, one upon the other [...] they would make added protection for the next attack. [...] The bodies would have to be clawed at, pecked, and dragged aside [...] He stuffed the cracked panes with the bleeding bodies of the birds. (111)

The narrative vaguely intimates that anthropocentric notions of taboo might be governing its protagonist's fortification attempts: trying to get at him and his family, the birds would have to commit the 'mortal sins' of cannibalism and necrophagy. Nat's defense strategy does not work, however, and the birds attack the house again despite of the 'corpse shield' (cf. 112). While this narrative detail might serve the purpose of emphasizing the animals' monstrosity and signifying them as what Borkfeldt (3) calls the 'ultimate other', it also points to the question of animal ethics. 20th century philosopher Levinas (quoted in Morgan, 723), discussing the differentiation of humans and animals in a Darwinian context, characterizes animal being as existential struggle:

The human breaks with pure being, which is always a persistence in being. That is my principal thesis. A being is something that is attached to being, to its being. That is Darwin's idea. The animal being is a struggle for life, a struggle for life without ethics.

In du Maurier's text, the birds do not follow any observable ethical code, let alone a human one. However, they display an extreme sense of duty in following their mission, which goes so far that it outweighs the animals' individual survival instincts. They have no regard for their own lives and kill themselves in order to kill humans. Levinas' 'struggle for life' is perverted into a struggle for death. Some species are shown specifically suicidal in their behavior:

One single gannet, above him in the sky. The wings folded suddenly to its body. It dropped, like a stone [...] They heard the thud of the gannet as it fell. (104)

Du Maurier's narrative interweaves a verisimilar representation of the animal's flight technique with the theme of inanimateness, expressed in the stone simile. The bird is objectified into a bomb. The kamikaze image suggests that the animal does not care

about itself but acts as an instrument without a will of its own, serving an extrinsic purpose at the cost of its own life. The smaller bird species, such as robins, finches or sparrows, are shown to behave in similar fashion. They hurl themselves against windows and walls as biological projectiles as if remote-controlled. Nat speculates that the birds must receive a signal, waiting for 'orders': "it was as though they waited upon some signal. As though some decision had yet to be given. The order was not clear." (102)

The birds are described as beings without a consciousness of their own, as mere receivers of commands, simultaneously, the anthropomorphic military analogy suggests the existence of leadership and the narrative intimates that vengeful nature might be giving the commands. As has been shown, several scholarly interpretations characterize *The Birds* as a nature-revenge or nature-rebellion narrative. Within the frame of such a narrative, the birds are not agents of their own but act as instruments of a higher force. While the animals arguably do not follow intrinsic motivations and do not possess individual consciousness, they display remarkable coordination and cooperation skills. As an army comprising multiple species, several of which predatory, the birds appear to be able to suppress any in-group predation and apparently are capable of pursuing several sub-objectives in the pursuit of a complex mission, as Nat observes:

They were spreading in huge formation across the sky. [...] They were rooks, crows, jackdaws, magpies [...] all birds that usually preyed upon the smaller species; but this afternoon they were bound on some other mission. [...] "They've been given the towns", thought Nat, "they know what they have to do." (100)

In contrast to its representation of the cannon-fodder species, the text suggests that birds of prey and corvidae – along with black-backed gulls – possess intelligence and - to limited extent – individuality. The narrative introduces these species after several relatively inconsequential small-scale bird attacks (cf. 101 pp) and their arrival marks a peripety. They appear to exert control over the other animals and the collective turns into an organized force, mounting increasingly destructive attacks.

Unlike Golding's portrayal of Neanderthal social consciousness, du Maurier's text does not elucidate how the birds organize themselves or how they communicate but it does provide detailed insight regarding their cognitive capacities. The black-backed gulls

are a key species when it comes to intelligence. Nat observes them to be “intent upon their flight”, in contrast to the passivity of other species (102). The narrative goes on to mark them as rogues of the avian class by having Nat recall that they kill new-born lambs (cf. 103). A later passage describes them as leaders of the flock, deciding on targets and implies that they are capable of learning: “They had not learned yet how to cling to a shoulder, how to rip clothing, how to dive in mass upon the head [...] But with each dive, they became bolder” (104). Whereas du Maurier’s text highlights specific characteristics of certain species, it does not show any particular specimen to possess an individual personality or mentality. Despite their taxonomic diversity, the text mentions 30 different species, according to Bellanca a potential sign of du Maurier’s remarkable “bird literacy” (30), the birds themselves are merely composite parts of a collective, the flock. As such, they are collectively ‘vivisected’ in Nat’s final contemplations on the workings of their brain(s):

Nat listened to the tearing sound of splintering wood and wondered how many million years of memory were stored in those little brains, behind the stabbing beaks, the piercing eyes, now giving them this instinct to destroy mankind with all the deft precision of machines. (122)

The machine comparison, reminiscent of Descartes *bête-machine*, implies that the birds, while apparently capable of destroying human civilization, are no agents of their own. In the logic of Nat’s metaphor, they are creatures with a mission but without a cause, following an ancient program code “stored in those little brains”, remaining, as Masurczak (154) states, “inexplicable within our traditional anthropocentric frame of mind”.

7.5 Symbolical aspects

While the attack of an entire class of the animal kingdom is terrifying on its own, non-biocentric scholarly readings of *The Birds* have identified a broad range of symbolic aspects. Wisker states that:

In *The Birds* invasion is both of the sacrosanct family home space, and the body through pecking and stabbing. The birds enter through cracks in the window and down the chimneys. (25)

Throughout the text, the birds try to invade the Hocken's house, home to a nuclear family consisting of father, mother and two children. In an early scene, the animals manage to get in and attack several members of the family (cf. 86-90). Going along with Petersen's reading, who examines the anti-patriarchal thrust of du Maurier's horror-writing, stating that "her stories both question and subvert established notions of order, control and restrictive ideology and, in particular, [challenge] the patriarchal world in which she lived" (58), the successful invasion can be viewed as to not only threaten the characters' physical integrity but to challenge the male protagonist's patriarchal authority. Following this line of thought and defining Nat as a patriarch, one of his core duties as 'man of the house' is the protection of his family from external danger. Although Nat is present, the birds manage to invade the sphere of the home and attack the family's children.

The window was wide open. Through it came the birds, hitting first the ceiling and the walls, then swerving in midflight, turning to the children in their beds. (88)

Nat tries to fend them off with a blanket. Converting an item of the family household into a weapon, Nat acts as a defender of both the material and the symbolical homestead.

He seized a blanket from the nearest bed and, using it as a weapon, flung it to right and left about him in the air. [...] He felt the thud of bodies, heard the fluttering of wings, but they were not yet defeated, for again and again they returned to the assault, jabbing his hands, his head, the little stabbing beaks sharp as pointed forks. The blanket became a weapon of defense; he wound it about his head, and then in greater darkness beat at the birds with his bare hands. (88)

Due to the birds' persistence and aggressiveness, Nat is forced to repurpose the blanket: In the course of the fight, Nat is forced to use it over his head and use it as shield against the avian attacks. The narratorial comment underlines the shift in the power struggle, stating that "the blanket became a weapon of defence" (88). Hidden under the blanket, Nat resorts to the most basic means of self-defense, blindly thrashing at the birds with his bare hands.

On a symbolical level, his desperate fighting stance reveals a sharp irony: Seeking cover against the invasive attack under arguably one of the most homely items, a blanket, the defender of the home renders himself ineffective, only able to take blind shots at the birds. The helpless image of a man wildly lashing out against a multitude of tiny foes (the narrative later reveals that they are all small songbirds, cf. 89) he cannot see does not convey patriarchal authority but rather appears comical. Wisker (cf. 25-26) discusses the ramifications of gender in du Maurier's story and Hitchcock's film adaption. While Hitchcock's film chooses a female heroine, a decision which according to Wisker "emphasizes the maternal power of women, and also their rather emotional vulnerability" (25), du Maurier's text opts for a male protagonist, allowing it to show the "undermining of the logical, sensible father figure [which] cuts more deeply into the fabric of our sense of shared security and hence is a deeper critique than the film" (25).

A Freudian reading of the scene, in which Nat is shown especially worried by attacks on his eyes (cf. 88-89), suggests Nat's patriarchal authority might not only be threatened from above the belt. Wisker regards "some of the story's power and horror [...] based upon both fear of castration and fear of dismemberment through blinding" (25). She refers to Freud's interpretation of Hoffmann's *Sandmann* in his 1919 essay 'The Uncanny', in which a subconscious connection between the fear of losing one's eyes and castration anxiety is discussed, stating that the "disempowering of Nat [...] threatens patriarchy's hold upon sanity and order" (26).

Abrash discusses *The Birds*, both text and film, in the context of terrorism. She draws parallels between the 9/11 attacks and those of the suicidal attack birds, describing both as "featuring scarcely believable large-scale assaults on human life by fearless, merciless, and well-organized assailants" (167). Though she concedes that such an

association may be “far-fetched” (167), given that the film was made in the 1960ies and the story written in the 1950ies, she highlights several parallels, such as the assailants “single minded determination” and “indifference to their own fate” in the pursuit of their mission as well as the “bafflement felt by each of the assaulted societies about why it has become the object of terror” (169).

Historically closer to du Maurier’s text, the German WWII bombing campaigns against the United Kingdom, also called *The Blitz* (cf. Gilbert), have found entry into the narrative. Nat, boarding up his house against the birds, recalls how he and his mother had done the same during the war, “not that it had been of any use, when the moment came” (97). In a later scene, in which his wife is terrified by the realization that she and her family are effectively caged in their own house with no rescue in sight, Nat attempts to comfort her by stating: “We’re snug and tight, like in an air-raid shelter” (cf. 106). Another scene arguable alludes to the important role of the BBC during the war: When the radio stops broadcasting announcements and instead dance music is played, Nat concludes that there must be an emergency situation at the radio station and tries “to remember if it had happened in the war, during the heavy raids on London” (107). Bellanca (31) states that the “association of flight with death [...] dominated du Maurier’s life during the war years” and suggests that the “fear and privation” experienced by du Maurier during these years is “reproduced in the postwar milieu of ‘The Birds’”.

The Cold War is another real-life influence that might be visible in the text. Mr. Triggs comment that the Russians must have poisoned the birds (cf. 103) is, perhaps, a reference to the political paranoia of the McCarthy era, also called the second Red Scare (cf. Hudson). More subtle allusions to the Cold War might be found in the text’s repeated conflation of the birds and the Arctic Circle through character comment (cf. 93, 94, 96) or the frequent representation of the birds as clouds (cf. 86, 97, 100), arguably reminiscent of the mushroom clouds of nuclear explosions. Bellanca (32) states that “*The Birds* contains futuristic parallels with the scenarios of nuclear devastation so feared after 1945” and claims that “Nat conjures a specter similar to the effects of nuclear deployment” by contemplating the dangers of the use of mustard gas. Wisker views the human-animal conflict portrayed in *The Birds* as a phenomenon essentially defiant of rationalization or historical contextualization and characterizes

the narrative's characters' Cold War-references as futile attempts of clinging to logical explanations for something they can neither understand nor control:

The post-war (1952) contextualized interpretation of the birds' abnormal actions [...] as a symptom of poisoning by the Russians, with hope of the seventh cavalry rescue by the Americans [...] is rather lame. Nat holds onto this possibility because it at least would confirm his sense of an understandable unnatural activity [...] within the bounds of [the] logical [...], rather than one which defies any human control or understanding. (26)

Bellanca (cf. 28), similar to Wisker, points out the inexplicability and uncontrollability of the phenomenon presented by the text, yet marks it as "natural" [parenthesis added by Bellanca] rather than "unnatural", as Wisker does in her analysis quoted above. She regards *The Birds* as a critique of human arrogance, engendering "humility about our purported technological dominance" (28). Following Bellanca's reading of the text, the birds be viewed as triumphators over human technology or, more generally, human civilization: In an early scene (cf. 86), a large flock of birds darkens the sky so that the farmer Triggs can no longer work the fields with his tractor. The mere presence of the animals forces a machine standstill. On a symbolical level, two central pillars of civilization, one ancient, one modern, are under attack: agriculture and machine technology. In a later scene, after the birds have already started to target humans, Mr.Triggs and his farmhand Jim, arguably symbolizing human hubris, want to shoot the birds, announcing: "It looks as though we're in for some fun" and ask Nat to join the "shooting match" (102). Nat, possibly representing humility, foresees the fatality of this misjudgment (cf. 102). The narrative points out the inefficacy of gunpowder technology by later showing all people of the farm dead (cf.118-119).

As the story progresses, advanced military technology is shown as impotent compared to the forces of nature. An attack airplane, sent to destroy the birds, is immediately brought down by the them or in abstract terms: the mechanical imitation is easily destroyed by the original (cf. 109).

Towards the final of the narrative, human military technology is symbolically castrated along with the hopes the protagonist places in it: Nat spots grey shades on the ocean and believes the navy, perhaps one of the strongest symbols of military might in British culture, is coming to the rescue:

“Good old navy,” he said, “they never let us down. They’re coming down channel, they’re turning in the bay.” He waited, straining his eyes [...] towards the sea. He was wrong, though. It was not ships. The Navy was not there. The gulls were rising from the sea. (121)

The narrative subtly uses the protagonist’s optical illusion to expose the impotence of civilization’s institutions in their fight against nature. The mirage, visually amalgamating birds and human weaponry, is preceded by several other deceptive sensory impressions of the protagonist. In the opening scene, Nat perceives a massive swarm of birds as a “cloud” (86), later he mistakes the birds for the “white caps of the waves” (96). In another scene, he sees a “great white cloud” (95) and does not realize that it is a flock of gulls. Later, he spots a “smudge” (100) which later turns out to be the birds. Apart from the protagonist’s misidentifications, fauna and inanimate nature are frequently blended in metaphors, the narrator calls them a “mist” (100) or a “wind in the chimney” (87), for instance. In the bird burial scene mentioned in the previous chapter, a strong wind blows the animals’ bodies away and carries them up, symbolically reanimating them (cf. 95). Through such techniques, the narrative suggests that nature and birds are one and it shows both of them to be hostile to humans. The story starts with a deceptively bucolic description of an idyllic autumnal landscape, the “earth rich where the plough had turned it” (85). Amidst this scenery, the protagonist watches birds in the distance, contemplating their nature. His initial observation that they are “purposeful and intent” is soon followed by an impression that they seem “restless and uneasy”, that their behavior appears unusual. Thus, tranquility is dissolved and a sense of foreboding established. Inanimate nature follows and a cold wind rises (cf. 85). Nat states that “winter is coming” (86), described by the narrator as a black instead of a white one, bringing freezing winds and frost from the Arctic circle that tear at the protagonist’s shoulder and make the soil look “black and hard” (cf. 89). In the further course of the narrative, more direct parallels of hostile fauna and nature are thematized: The protagonist finds out that the bird attacks, wave after wave, are synchronous to the tide (cf. 109.110). All of the above supports a symbolical reading of the birds as agents of nature, a hostile nature, which, as Paglia’s puts it, proves to be “more tyrannous than man” (4).

7.6 Ecocritical aspects

Although *The Birds* were written before the dawn of modern environmentalism and ecology, scholars have argued that it is as an ecocritical text or a text expressing environmental concerns. Viewed by Cardin (60) as an influential representative of eco-horror, a literary genre the origins of which he traces back to foundational works of gothic literature such as Walpole's 1764 *The Castle of Otranto* or Lewis' 1796 *The Monk* (59), *The Birds* along with Benchley's 1974 novel *Jaws* are the literary inspirations for what Cardin calls "the most infamous eco-horror films of all time". Cardin (60) views the theme of 'revenge of nature' and an ecocentric perspective as the two mainstays of eco-horror fiction, which both can be identified in *The Birds*. While the drastic antagonism between humans and birds points towards the spectacle of horror, however, the finesse of du Maurier's narrative in portraying the conflict invites reading her text as a complex comment on the human-animal relationship beyond the boundaries of the horror genre. In her interpretation of Coleridge's famous 1797-98 *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Larissa Budde looks past interspecies hostility – as in wanton human violence committed against birds – and interprets the ballad as an ecocentric parable revealing the existing kinship between animals and human beings. In her reading, Coleridge's albatross is a symbolic embodiment of the non-human other, a "receiver and giver of non-utilitarian love" (89). *The Birds* are of a different feather as are the interspecies relations represented in it: In du Maurier's text animals are perpetrators, not victims of violence and as ambassadors of the animal kingdom the avian attackers herald the termination of human-animal kinship. Camille Paglia (7) reads *The Birds* in the tradition of Coleridge's raw-nature tableaux and states that the text "directly addresses the theme of destructive, rapacious nature".

The narrative's treacherously bucolic setting initially conceals this theme. Although the sea can be fierce, coastal Cornwall is not a place readily associated with fiendish nature and the text fortifies its pastoral setting by implicitly pitting the countryside against the "frivolity of the city" (cf. Paglia 9), critically commented on by the rustic characters (cf. 97-98). Their rural disposition, however, appears to make some of them especially vulnerable to the depredations of 'rapacious nature'. The narrative shows the people on the Triggs' farm unable to accept the growing alienation between them

and their environment, expressed, for instance, in Mrs. Trigg's and her farmhand Jim's initial disinterest in the bird attacks (cf. 93) or Mr. Trigg's and Jim's cheerful anticipation of shooting the birds for a "gull breakfast" (cf. 103). As people of the country who make their living with farming, the idea that nature is turning against them seems to go against their self-conception as beings that do not only live off but live with the land, and they show no capacity to grasp the dimension of change that their environment is undergoing.

Nat is more sensitive to the changes of nature. Paglia (8) characterizes him as a character "attuned to nature's disturbances as an ancient Druid", a "man of the country" and an "isolated consciousness" among the texts' characters, who seems to be the only one "able to read the sign language of the birds as they mass". His reading of the birds' behavior is misleading, however, and exemplifies human difficulty to come to terms with nature. Similar to its deceptive use of setting, the narrative employs Nat the 'druid' as a decoy. Through his eyes the readers co-interpret the mysterious events, following him in his vain attempts to rationalize the irrational.

In the beginning of the story, Nat avidly watches the birds, who are agitated and gather in unusually large flocks. His observations seamlessly merge with that of the narrator, who wonders about their destination as well as their motivation, after which Nat concludes with an anthropocentric simile, already partially quoted in chapter 7.4:

"Perhaps [...] a message comes to the birds in autumn, like a warning. Winter is coming. Many of them perish. And like people, who, apprehensive of death before their time, drive themselves to work or folly, the birds do likewise." (86)

The wording of the protagonist's explanation - "death before their time" - carries a poetically encoded warning. The narrative subtly establishes the birds as harbingers of an intangible menace through Nat's ornithological lens which he himself, from his limited character perspective, is not aware of, although its bodily manifestation is right in front of his eyes. After the attack of a flock of several different birds (cf. 89), Nat comments on the birds' interspecies cooperation:

There were robins, finches, sparrows, blue tits, larks, and bramblings, birds that by nature's law kept to their own flock and their own territory, and now, joining one with another in their urge for battle. (89)

“Hocken, the man of the country, [...] immediately perceive[s] the breach in nature’s law that normally keeps different bird species from flocking together”, as Paglia (9) puts it. Nonetheless, Nat seeks to attribute the birds’ abnormal behavior to natural causes, stating to his wife that lack of food must be the reason for their unusual aggressiveness (cf. 89). Nat’s notion of a ‘law of nature’, a code defining regularity of animal behavior, exemplifies an anthropocentric perspective on nature which presupposes that animals must follow the script of ethology. When the narrative’s birds do not act the way they are expected to, the protagonist perceives a breach of the law. Instead of questioning his knowledge about birds, he insists that they obey the rules he believes to be governing their behavior. In Steven Spielberg’s adaptation of Bentley’s bestseller *Jaws*, the shark hunter Quint shows a similar reaction in a scene in which the animal antagonist does not act according to his expectations. Having been hooked with several floating barrels to prevent it from staying underwater, the shark nonetheless manages to dive. Quint is unable to rationally process what he is forced to witness and insists in consternation: “He can’t stay down with three barrels on him, not with three barrels he can’t.” (*Jaws*, 1975). In Kipling’s *Jungle Books*, animals are to follow rules of conduct laid down in the ‘law of the jungle’. The poem *The Law for the Wolves*, chapter two of *The Second Jungle Book*, explicitly codifies animal behavior. Despite of the anthropocentric frame, the rules aim at preventing conflict and improving cooperation within the wolf pack but also with other animals. In contrast, the law du Maurier’s protagonist perceives to be in place appears to forbid interspecies cooperation.

Mr. Trigg, after realizing that the birds are dangerously aggressive, suspects anthropogenic causes (cf. 103). He speculates, as has already been mentioned, that the Russians might have poisoned the birds, a theme reminiscent of Arthur Machen’s 1917 novella *The Terror*, set in WW I, in which hostile Germans manipulate British animals with a special beam, the Z-Ray, into attacking humans. Nat is skeptical about Trigg’s speculations but can no longer generate theories of his own. The farmer’s bizarre guess makes it obvious that the people of the countryside, even Nat, cannot read the ‘sign language of the birds’ and will not provide the reader with explanations,

the alienation between humans and nature is evident and the human-animal kinship is dissolved.

Towards its final, du Maurier's text severs all bonds between its human characters and fauna. After the birds killing of the people on the Triggs' farm, even domestic animals turn against humans. The sheep have disappeared and the cows trample the corpses of their former keepers in a violent divorce from animal husbandry (cf. 118-119). The remaining characters, Nat, his wife and their children, are in shock and no longer seek to comprehend what is going on but instead withdraw to their shelter (cf. 121 pp).

The institutions of civilization are equally clue- and helpless. Throughout the narrative, they are shown incapable of interpreting the changes of nature as well as of offering any help, expressed in the irregular BBC radio announcements (cf. 96, 97, 107) Nat and his family listen to. Before the broadcasts stop, signaling a breakdown of infrastructure, a "solemn, grave voice" reports large scale attacks, announces a national emergency and calls for safety precautions but "owing to the unforeseen and unparalleled nature of the present crisis" (107) is neither able to provide any explanation as to why the birds are turning against mankind nor to suggest any effective counter measures.

Like "the best brains of the country" (109), Nat cannot make sense of what is happening but his close observation of the birds' behavior allows him to discover, as mentioned in the previous chapter, that their attacks are in sync with the tide (109-110) and he uses this information to mitigate the situation. By adapting to the relentless rhythm of his antagonists, he manages to procure much needed supplies, prepare defenses and thus increase his and his family's chance of survival (cf. 112-119), if only temporarily. From a 21st century ecocritical perspective, with climate change instead of birds at our doors, du Maurier's novella reads almost prophetic. Apart from the evidently unusual bird attacks, her characters are confronted with general environmental change. They perceive the weather to be strange (cf. 90), they find the winter to be exceptionally cold (cf. 92) and the radio reports speculate about changes of the airstream (cf. 94), pointing from local weather phenomena to climatic disturbances. Mrs. Trigg utters her bewilderment:

Can you tell me where this cold is coming from? Is it Russia? I've never seen such a change. And it's going on, the wireless says. Something to do with the Arctic Circle. (92)

Nat picks up her considerations and calls the situation "[...] unnatural, queer. The weather prophets must be right. The change was something connected with the Arctic Circle" (94). While Nat does not differentiate between climate and weather, the word 'change', also used by Mrs. Trigg, signifies more than just a temporary disturbance. The characters do not express their concerns in the terms of a scientifically informed 21st century ecological consciousness but they clearly notice an imbalance in the environment. Looking at some of today's voices in the discourse of climate change, du Maurier's characters display significant similarities in their way of discussing the changes they perceive. Even in 2020, many people confuse weather and climate, utter diffuse notions and seek simple explanations for an overwhelmingly complex phenomenon.

In their way of coping with looming catastrophe, du Maurier's fictional 1950ies characters show even more parallels to present-day non-fictional humans. The text reads like a clairvoyant comment on contemporary ecological failure. First, people ignore nature or misinterpret it. They feel that something is wrong but repress their unease. When they begin to see the changes, they conceitedly engage in rationalizations but fail to realize how dire the situation has already become. Even when the problems start flying in their face, they long manage to brush them off until concerns outgrow the blissful shade of ignorance. Then, humans nervously start looking for means to assert control, unwilling to see that they have long lost it. When even the sacred weapons of technology fail, panic ensues and people find themselves in a catastrophic scenario, thrown back into a primeval struggle for survival. With Nat, the unheard alerter, there is even a biophile Cassandra in du Maurier's story, the stunning actuality of which allows viewing it as a timeless parable on human ecological hubris.

Apart from climate change, the text also touches the theme of pollution, another central element of environmental discourse. After all conventional military means have failed, Nat contemplates about the use of mustard gas as a means of last resort. "There's

always gas" (109), he reassures himself but simultaneously ponders the collateral damages such a measure could cause:

"They'll have to be ruthless", he thought. "Where the trouble's worst they'll have to risk more lives, if they use gas. All the livestock, too, and the soil – all contaminated." (110)

The text's ecocritical undertones are subtle. Du Maurier's narrative does not formulate an overt ecological critique and does not accuse its characters of sins against nature but it exposes the ambiguity of their attitudes towards the environment. Nat is well aware of the ecological damage mustard gas could cause but his reservations against the use of chemical weapons are not grounded in concern for the environment but its agricultural exploitability. His pragmatic, utilitarian approach shows a strong focus on use-value, the potential compromising of which cautions careful deliberation even when his own life is at stake. While earlier in the narrative Nat is shown in emotional connection to animals when he tries to bury some dead birds (cf. 94), the powerful logics of use-value later command him, as already mentioned in chapter 7.4, to utilize their dead bodies as a shield (cf. 112). The direness of the situation, of course, does not allow for guilty conscience, let alone ecological scruples, yet the scene illustrates the dynamics of objectification and alienation in Nat's relationship to nature.

Leaving the ominous Red Scare-context aside, Mr. Trigg's poisoned birds appear as another ecologically meaningful motif. Ten years before Rachel Carson's 1962 seminal ecocritical text *Silent Spring*, in which she uses the metaphor of silenced birds to draw attention to the terrible toll insecticide⁵² overuse takes on the environment, du Maurier's text presents a thoroughly disturbed ecosystem where birds are not just symbols but agents of death. At first glance, the texts appear to be almost antagonistic. Carson's book is a scientific accusation of human environmental abuse with a special focus on the plight of birds while du Maurier's text shows helpless humans being bullied by them. From this point of view, *The Birds* seems to promote what Bellanca (28) calls a "victim-blaming hostility to nature". Bellanca does not accuse du Maurier's text to be oblivious of environmental concerns, however, but discusses the problematicity of applying a rigid environmentalist matrix on a work of fiction:

⁵² Carson (4) suggests 'biocides' as a more appropriate term, emphasizing the ecological collateral damage caused by insecticides.

From an environmentalist perspective, ignoring the question of literal birds would leave us with a text that not only “effaces” real animals but also perpetrates an ecological scandal by imagining those animals as a danger to human existence, when for over a century the situation has been the other way around. (Bellanca 27)

Bellanca mainly discusses du Maurier’s portrayal of bird attacks outside the premises of ecocriticism but interprets the text as a critique of human arrogance and technological hubris cautioning humility, which she views as “not inconsistent with environmental respect” (28).

Soles finds *The Birds* “wanting from an ecocritical perspective” (531), because of its “refusal to assign clear causation to the bird attacks”. She focuses on Hitchcock’s film adaptation, yet the same reproach could, perhaps, be raised against du Maurier’s text. Soles (cf. 529-533) identifies coherences between Carson’s and both Hitchcock’s and du Maurier’s work in that they all share a central environmental thematic and employ apocalyptic rhetoric to convey it. While apocalypse can be exploited for the sake of spectacle, du Maurier’s text elaborates on the humbling aspects of catastrophe. The birds may be monstrous in their role as attackers but they are not vilified. Peter Benchley repeatedly expressed regrets about having written *Jaws* and considered his novel to have done a disservice to the reputation of sharks by portraying them as killing machines (cf. Wyatt). Du Maurier’s story may have caused some people to nervously scan the skies but it is safe to assume that it did not seriously damage the image of birds, let alone establish them as nature’s villains, although it shows them similarly relentless and violent in their attacks as Benchley’s *Jaws* shows the great white shark. In contrast to the shark, however, their antagonism is not intrinsically motivated but extrinsically determined. They are compelled agents of a diegetic milieu that does not allow them to do otherwise, or as McCombe (quoted in Soles, 530) puts it, they populate a world which is “unable to maintain harmony between humans and nature”. A look at the ecosystem represented in du Maurier’s text confirms this diagnosis: the weather is harsh, the ground is frozen, the wind tears at the protagonist’s shoulders and the animate elements of nature are even more hostile. Not only is an entire class of the animal kingdom antagonistic towards humans but also the domestic animals are not on friendly terms with them, there are no friendly interactions between humans and animals at all. Furthermore, the narrative’s fauna – with the exception of the

taxonomically diverse birds – is poor, as there are only three non-avian species: cattle, sheep and humans. Potential non-human allies, such as cats or dogs are not present, although the story is set in the countryside and shows a farming community, cultural representations of which seldom omit pets. Thus, the human characters are not only thrown back on themselves in a social or material sense but are also isolated ecologically. They live in a deprived environment and the absence of animal life - apart from the hostile birds - exacerbates the sense of desolation pervading the text's dystopian scenario. In this light, du Maurier's story can be read as an ecocritical cautionary tale, even if the horror (or maybe: eco-horror) it conveys may not be rooted in the pangs of what later generations would maybe call an ecological conscience but rather those of an ecological subconscious, powerfully at work in the subtext of an animal attack narrative. As such, *The Birds* might be a text not only capable of inculcating "a little eco-humility" (Bellanca, 41) but – by literally reappropriating the bird's-eye view to its animal eponym – of inspiring a reexamination of the human position in the natural world from an integral perspective.

8 Comparative analysis

Now that each work has been discussed individually, the following will offer a comparative analysis. Fear of predators is a central topic of all three texts. In *Crusoe*, the themes of fear and gunpowder technology, symbol of human ingenuity and European civilization, are intertwined. The narrative shows Crusoe overcome his fear by reassuring himself of his technological advantage over predators. In all encounters between Crusoe and dangerous animals, it demonstrates the devastating effects of gunpowder on animal bodies. Psychological effects on animals are equally emphasized and human technology, ingenuity as well as violence are shown as the decisive factors ensuring human victory over predators. Fearlessly confronting and killing predators with guns is also orchestrated as an initiation ritual: the animalized Friday is allowed to ascend to human status by doing so.

While the animals of *Crusoe* are shown to be terrified by gunpowder weapons, the predators of *TMOT* are portrayed as absolutely fearless creatures, whereas human fear is selectively emphasized to underline racial and cultural difference and to confirm

imperialist hierarchies. The European protagonist, while shown to be emotionally affected by the animal antagonists and their acts of predation on other human characters, is stylized as a hero, able to exert self-control and kill the animals in his function as protector of the non-European characters, who are presented as terrified and powerless victims of the predators. The representation of human fear and powerlessness is of central importance in *The Birds*, yet without such racial or cultural implications and employed to destabilize hierarchies and notions of superiority instead of solidifying them. The text portrays the psychological effects predation causes and shows predatory animals as a terrifying force of nature. Central aspects of the representation are animal alterity and the alienation between animals and humans. The text destabilizes notions of animal-human kinship by showing only hostile animal-human interactions, including domestic animals, and by emphasizing human inability of interpreting animal behavior. The birds are represented as a monstrous, incomprehensible ultimate other. The portrayal of behavioral abnormality, including suicidality and necrophagy, collective animal hostility, repeated reductive representations of the birds' bodies and bodily as well as domestic invasion are central strategies of conveying monstrosity. In *TMOT*, animal alterity is employed in the context of race and imperialism. The predators invading the sphere of humans are shown to selectively target non-European victims. Furthermore, predators are stylized as enemies of the British imperial project. They are referred to as savage brutes, emphasizing their animality, and indirectly associated with demonic entities, emphasizing aspects of monstrosity and alterity. The relationship between humans and fauna as a whole, however, is not signified by universal hostility and alienation, despite the focus on animal-human predation. The text shows instances of friendly interspecies contact, however focuses on orchestrating human domination over wildlife in the context of hunting and domestication.

Crusoe focuses on alterity in the contexts of culture/race, anthropophagy and criminality. Strategies of animalization are employed to other non-Europeans or to signify social deviancy. European criminals are described in zoomorphic predator-metaphors and Africans and Caribbeans are associated with cannibalism and compared to animal predators, however, in some cases this is moderated by narratorial comments mitigating the discriminatory dimension. In the early research stage for this

paper, it was expected that the Cartesian notion of animals as machines, viewed by many scholars as a paradigm shift, would in some way surface in the text. While utilitarian animal ethics and a use-value related bias against predators are clearly visible in the text, Descartes influence was not found to be obvious, if present at all. Furthermore, analysis proved that compared to the other texts, Crusoe devotes little attention to animal-human predation and focuses on other forms of interspecies interaction. The human-animal relationship - as presented in the text - is not distant and encompasses companionship and animal husbandry, animal-human conflict is only a side-aspect and animal-human predation is of little consequence. Nonetheless, the text features several dangerous animals. Exotic predators and their behavior are represented in an abstract and undetailed way, perhaps reflections of limited zoological knowledge, whereas European predators – wolves and bears - and their behavior are represented in more detail, especially regarding behavior. The text's portrayal of wolves, given the geographical setting of the attack and the characterization of the animals as monstrous creatures, might have been influenced by historical phenomena, namely the French wolf hysteria during the 17th and 18th century.

All texts portray aspects of animal intelligence and - to different degree and in different forms - present animals as agents. In du Maurier's text agenda appears more relevant than agency. The birds are shown to have a goal but no visible intrinsic motivation nor any form of personal motive. Furthermore, the text does not explicitly state whether the attacks are predatory or if killing is the main purpose and eating just follows as a side effect. In contrast, predatory intent is clearly marked in the other texts, most intensely in TMOT. The birds are shown as an organic collective, there are intimations of hierarchy and leadership, expressed in military metaphors. They are represented as capable of following objectives and of effectively cooperating against humans. Some of them are shown able to learn and to adapt their behavior, however none of them are portrayed as individuals with a personality, instead they are likened to machines. They are by far the most powerful among the various animal antagonists of the texts and their apparent superiority to modern human technology might be interpreted as a comment on human hubris, a motif not found in the other narratives. The lions of TMOT are portrayed as highly intelligent and as capable of outwitting humans, who are shown intimidated by these qualities. Their individuality is emphasized and they are

represented as animals doing what they want, especially in the context of anthropophagy, which is, somewhat unsurprisingly, a theme of enormous importance in *TMOT*, graphically described in many detailed passages. *Crusoe* is less interested in animal anthropophagy, perhaps attributable to the central importance of human anthropophagy in the text, however does describe it graphically as well, whereas *The Birds* creates horror by indirectly portraying it. *Crusoe* is more interested in the co-operational skills of animal attackers and describes them in military metaphors. They are shown as intelligent and cunning and the fight scene which shows their attempt at predation is orchestrated as a large-scale battle triumphantly won by humans by use of excessive violence and, as already mentioned, gunpowder technology. Guns are of great importance in *TMOT*, however not primarily in fights with predators but mainly in the context of trophy hunting. The protagonist is by far the most prolific predator in the text and kills hundreds of animals, which is at no point critically commented on, unsurprisingly, perhaps, since the author recounts his own real-life hunting experiences.

Hostility of inanimate nature is a theme mainly found in *The Birds* and *TMOT*. In du Maurier's text, nature herself is the enemy as a vengeful force materializing in the shape of the birds and the portrayal of the environment as well as several historical allusions to contemporary environmental issues allow to interpret the text as an ecocritical comment, however not an explicit one. In *TMOT* the environment surrounding humans is described as inhospitable and as an obstacle to be overcome by civilization, whereas *The Birds* shows how civilization is overcome by forces of nature. In *Crusoe*, nature is mainly a resource but not an enemy. There are however, some minor connections between animal hostility and unfriendly natural conditions, mainly snow, cold and darkness in the wolf attack scene. Similarly, harsh weather and animal attacks are thematically conjoined in *The Birds*, whereas in *TMOT* thorny macchia and darkness define the setting of most animal attacks. Thorny bushes, however, also mark the main boundary between predators and humans. The way the text organizes horizontal barriers and vertical distance separating/not separating humans from animals might be interpreted as a racist reflection of ontological and imperialist conceits. Horizontal distance and barriers between animals and humans play a role in *Crusoe* and are shown to be partially effective in keeping humans safe,

especially in combination with gunpowder weaponry. In *The Birds*, the vertical dimension is of significant importance. The bird attacks, unsurprisingly, happen from above, some of them in the style of bombs, a theme with which the text metaphorically conjoins bird attacks and WWII bombardments. Barriers and boundaries are of central importance in the text and horror is generated by the portrayal of the animal attackers' repeated and increasingly successful attempts at overcoming them. Invasion as well as defense of the domestic sphere is one of most prominent themes of the text and has inspired antipatriarchal interpretations.

Emphasis of predator size, fierceness or strength, often expressed in sensationalist vocabulary, can be found in *Crusoe* and *TMOT*, with *Crusoe* employing them most frequently, whereas du Maurier's text does not make use of this representational strategy and instead focuses on monstrous aspects of behavior, subversively defamiliarizing harmless real-life animals by presenting them as threat to humans. *Crusoe* is least interested in realistic representation of animal physique, size exaggeration is a main feature of the text's portrayal of animal bodies, whereas *TMOT* and *The Birds* are comparatively realistic in their portrayal of animal physique and movement.

Anthropomorphisms are mainly found in *Crusoe*, the oldest of the texts. The narrator makes frequent use of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic metaphors. Furthermore, he describes predators in anthropomorphic ways, especially a bear, who is cynically compared to a fine gentleman and is used as an object of ridicule and violent spectacle, arguably a reflection of the practice of blood sports, popular during Defoe's time. Patterson's text is decidedly less anthropomorphic, despite the Victorian prose and describes predators mainly without use of anthropomorphisms, especially regarding their behavior. The narrator marks his interpretations as such by modifiers and appears to partially follow representational criteria outlined by anti-sentimentalist naturalists. Du Maurier's text is the least anthropomorphic of the three, which might be a conceptual choice in alignment with the general diegetic focus on alienation between humans and animals which would be compromised by anthropomorphic representation. The few metaphors in which human and animal domain are conjoined are focused on the themes of labor/struggle for survival, military themes as well as machines, the latter two in defamiliarizing context, emphasizing enmity and absence of emotion.

The most fundamental differences between the texts become visible in the power relations they choose to portray. In Defoe's 1719 *Crusoe*, written in an era when human dominance over nature was least assured, humans dominate predators in an exotic/foreign setting – leopards, lions, wolves, bears – by means of primitive gunpowder technology. They scare the animals off, they kill them at will and use them to confirm their position as humans. Hierarchies are clear. In Patterson's 1898 *TMOT*, written in an era when Britain was as powerful as never before and big game was hunted in the hundreds of thousands, two lions and the protest of indentured Indian laborers following the lions' predation stop the empire in its tracks but colonial order is restored by the white hunter-hero subduing both animal and human 'troublemakers'. Hierarchies which had come under question are restored. In du Maurier's 1952 *The Birds*, written in an era of industrial chicken farming and nuclear weapons, songbirds and seagulls invading a village in Cornwall, do not only destroy battleships and airplanes but destabilize almost every aspect of human life: family, society, civilization, hierarchies upturned. Given that in the 20th century human destruction of nature had reached monstrous dimensions, it might not come as a surprise that the literary imagination creates monstrous nature and has it invade an idyllic little world that subsequently turns out to be our entire planet.

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10 Appendix

Abstract

This paper examines the representation of predators and animal-human predation in British literature and discusses the following texts in detail: Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, J.H. Patterson's *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo* and du Maurier's *The Birds* are examined from literary animal studies and ecocritical perspectives with focus on the relation between their representational strategies and the cultural discourse on animals of their respective era. The theoretical part provides an overview of the cultural and historical dynamics that have taken influence on the image of predators and examines the concepts of animal agency, alterity and anthropomorphism in the context of human-animal conflict. In the *analysis of Crusoe*, zoomorphic and anthropomorphic representation of animal predators and criminals were discussed, human-wolf and human-bear conflict - as portrayed in the text - were analyzed and the text's system of 'gunbarrel husbandry' (Armstrong, 2008) was examined, influences of historical discourse on wolves were detected. In the analysis of *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo*, human-animal boundaries, the relationship between the text's representation of predators and empire, the theme of hunting and aspects of verisimilitude and species-framing were discussed. Animal-human predation was found to be functionally conjoined with the assertion of imperialist dominance. In the examination of *The Birds*, aspects of eco-horror and animal-horror were examined, WWII and antipatriarchal symbolism in the context of predation was analyzed and the text's ecocritical aspects were addressed. The text's representation of animal-human representation was found to focus an animal alterity and the destabilization of anthropocentric positions.

Aspects found to be prevalent in all three texts were emphasis on predator intelligence, dynamics of fear, anthropophagy and the display of predators as agents. In contrast to the other texts, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representation of predators was found to be prevalent in *Crusoe*, where predators are also functionalized in the context of racial and culturing othering. The theme of vicariously enacting power over human subjects through the killing of predators was found to be central to *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo*. Technology vs. predators proved to be a dominant theme in all texts, two of them, however, stage it in antithetical ways: while *Crusoe* orchestrates human technological triumph over predators, *The Birds* shows the castration of technology by

predators. All in all, little continuity was detected regarding the literary images, functions and roles of predators and predation, they proved to be varied and complex, going beyond stereotypical characterizations.

Abstract German

Die Arbeit befasst sich mit der Darstellung von Raubtieren und Angriffen von Raubtieren auf Menschen in der britischen Literatur anhand detaillierter Analyse folgender Texte: Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, J.H. Patterson's *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo*, und Daphne du Maurier's *The Birds*.

Die Texte werden auf das jeweils dargestellte Mensch-Tier Verhältnis untersucht. Alterität, Animal agency, und Anthropomorphismus stehen dabei in besonderem Fokus. Allgemeine narratologische Aspekte werden damit in Verschränkung untersucht. Ergänzend dazu werden die fiktionalisierten Tierangriffe auf ihr Verhältnis zu zoologisch und historisch etablierten Kenntnissen über tierische Prädation überprüft.

Defoes *Robinson Crusoe*, 1719 veröffentlicht, wird im Hinblick auf den bedeutenden Wandel der Mensch-Tier Beziehung im Zeitalter der Aufklärung beleuchtet. Ein zentrales Motiv des Textes ist die Anthropophagie, welches im Kontext von Mensch-Tier Dichotomien untersucht wird, wobei anthropomorphen und zoomorphen Darstellungsformen besondere Beachtung zukommt. Die Bedeutung von Zivilisationstechniken im Verhältnis des Protagonisten zu seiner Umwelt wird anhand des von Philip Armstrong geprägten Begriffs *gunbarrel husbandry* behandelt. Die Darstellung von imaginärer Bedrohung und physischer Auseinandersetzung zwischen Mensch und Raubtier stellt den Hauptteil der Untersuchung dar, wobei in einer detaillierten Analyse die Inszenierung des Kampfes zwischen Mensch und Wolf unter Berücksichtigung historisch-ethologischer Rekonstruktionen von Jean-Marc Moriceau und Aspekten von kultureller und genrespezifischer Verisimilität nach Tsvetan Todorov behandelt wird.

Henry Pattersons *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo*, erschienen 1907, wird im Kontext des späten Viktorianismus interpretiert. Der Mensch-Tier Konflikt im Text wird im Hinblick auf Kolonialismus und Darwinismus beleuchtet. Die Bedeutung der Jagd, die wechselnden Rollen von Jägern und Gejagten, die Rolle der Anthropophagie im Text sowie die Selbstverortung des Menschen innerhalb des textuellen Ökosystems stehen im Vordergrund der literarischen Analyse

Du Mauriers *The Birds*, 1952 erschienen, wird im kulturellen Kontext der Moderne analysiert. John Bergers Thesen über die zunehmende Entfremdung von Mensch und

Tier bilden dabei die zentrale theoretische Grundlage. Nach Bellancas Lesart wird die Monstrosität der Tier-Mensch Prädation im Text untersucht. Nachkriegsthematik, Ökologie & Ecohorror, psychologisch-symbolische Aspekte des Konflikts sowie die Opposition Natur und Kultur stehen im Fokus der Analyse.

Betonung von tierischer Intelligenz und von tierischer Agency, die Thematik von Angst und/oder Angstüberwindung sowie die Behandlung von Anthropophagie konnten als universelle Elemente der Darstellung im Kontext von Prädation identifiziert werden. Hyperbolik sowie anthropomorphe und zoomorphe Darstellungsformen stellten sich als dominante Stilmittel in *Crusoe* heraus. In *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo* ist der Kampf zwischen Mensch und Raubtier mit Kolonialsymbolik aufgeladen und präsentiert sich in vielen Aspekten als Stellvertreterkrieg. Der Einsatz von Technik gegen Raubtiere findet sich als zentrales Element in allen Texten, wird von diesen jedoch höchst unterschiedlich inszeniert: *Crusoe* orchestriert den Triumph menschlicher Technik über das Raubtier, *The Birds* kastriert menschliche Technik durch Raubtiere. Generell kann festgehalten werden, dass wenig Kontinuität bezüglich der literarischen Bilder, Funktionen und Rollen von Raubtieren und Prädation festgestellt werden konnte. Im Gegenteil, es zeigte sich eine überraschende Vielfalt jenseits stereotyper Charakterisierung.