

# Restoring the “Appropriate Relation”

## Human and Nonhuman Species Treatment in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina

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Hurricane Katrina devastated parts of New Orleans, trapping a large population of humans and companion species in the flood zone. In relation to the rescue efforts, controversy arose about the treatment of persons of color and the protocol excluding companion species from evacuation and rescue. Examples from media are used to illustrate how Agamben’s “state of exception” and Mbembe’s “necropolitics” emerge from the background into full visibility with species treatment in the flood zone. Normative human and nonhuman animal differences dissolved by the water into a zone of indistinction require symbolic repair to restore what Harriet Ritvo calls the “appropriate relation,” as it applies to both nonhuman animals and humans of color vis-à-vis dominant and exclusionary conceptions of the human. Media coverage during and after the event illustrates the ways the discursive relation between human and nonhuman animals is reconstructed as a strategy of re-memberment. This raises questions beyond this specific case about inter- and intra-species treatment based on Western (European) philosophical distinctions of the animal and human, and how intolerance toward pollution of inter-species mixing, made manifest in the flood zone, calls for a dismemberment of value over against the continuous reproduction of difference.

*Keywords:*  
 race; animality;  
 state of exception;  
 necropolitics;  
 posthuman;  
 Agamben; Mbembe;  
 Hurricane Katrina;  
 media

### INTRODUCTION

The flooding of parts of New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 generated considerable controversy about the treatment of human and nonhuman animal species, particularly as a consequence of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) not allowing companion species to accompany humans being evacuated or rescued. The state of emergency in the flood zone brought to the surface what has been—and remains—the vexed question of this relation, as it played out on the one hand in the treatment of persons of color, and companion species on the other. Both were certainly mistreated, but what emerged conspicuously in this situation, and continue to haunt the aftermath, are fundamental issues concerning both human and nonhuman welfare in relation to everyday life, particularly visible in the imbrication of race and animality that underpinned responses to the crisis.

“In the American cultural imaginary,” according to Claire Jean Kim (2015, p. 255), “the most animal of humans [is] the black man and the most human of animals [is] the dog.” In the flood zone in New Orleans post-

Katrina, this led to a displacement that “located black people not just between whites and animals, but *below* animals—that whites cared more about ‘pets’ than they did about black people” (Kim, 2015, p. 284; emphasis in original). It seemed that more concern was expressed for the trapped companion animals than for the humans—predominantly persons of color who occupied the lower lying areas of the city disproportionately affected by the flooding. For Kelly Oliver, “the sympathy that could have, or should have, been directed at African Americans suffering loss and death is displaced onto their dogs, seemingly because many white Americans can feel more sympathy toward dogs than they can toward African Americans.” (2012, p. 495)

To be clear, neither Kim’s nor Oliver’s words should be construed as prioritizing injustice to humans over that of maltreatment of other animal species; rather they point to how the conditions that prevailed after the hurricane prompted expressions of caring and sympathy for companion species that appeared to outweigh those directed toward the humans: as Oliver claims, “the abandoned dogs of Hurricane Katrina...received more

media attention than the abandoned people.” (2012, p. 495) Beyond noting this, however, neither Kim nor Oliver examine this media attention, and so miss an opportunity to analyze how media constructed—and reconstructed—a human/nonhuman animal relation during, and in the wake of, the disaster.

In these media accounts, the complex, embedded history of entwinement of discourses of human and nonhuman animals with racial discourses re-emerges in the (re)production of the social order in the aftermath of Katrina. I argue that the sets of normative relations governing the everyday are undone by the disaster—it “describes,” as Maurice Blanchot puts it: “it is what escapes the very possibility of experience” (1995, p. 7). Hence what follows is a “re(in)scribing” that, always late, reconstructs the order. This occurs, in part, in the operations of various sorts of media, such as in the accounts that are read by and inform Kim’s and Oliver’s discussions. This could be described, as I discuss elsewhere in regard to Katrina (Dowler, 2013, p. 147), as a “rememberment,” where the social body tries to restore the losses engendered by the flood, and to re-cover the relations laid bare by the event.

Conversely, if a “dis-memberment” is also in order here, “to re-member the Other by dismembering value” as Lindon Barrett (2009, p. 128) argues, whether or not this is feasible requires a remembering and (re)reading of the post-Katrina texts for what they reveal about values vis-à-vis the species within the flood zone. Moreover, as Lisa Marie Cacho (2012, “Introduction,” para. 29) suggests, the ways in which Katrina was “the cover story that made it easier to deny the past and present violences of abuse and abandonment” raises the question of how that story functioned to re-inscribe the organization of inter- and intra-species relations that were and are always already operational. The disaster exposes how this “dis-memberment”—Cacho’s social death—is threaded through with the human/nonhuman distinction.<sup>2</sup> Where the animal and the human are conjoined is with species treatment in the flood zone: what will die, and what will be saved, and under what conditions such choices are made. Disaster exposes those workings that are normally ever present but often unremarked in everyday life. If rememberment is part of a process that is undertaken in the intimate sphere, as persons search for their things, their relatives, and their animals, it is also scalar, insofar as the political enters to the degree that the disaster produces a catastrophe: the zone where species are explicitly rendered outside politics.

Here, Agamben’s (2005) “state of exception,” coupled with the more explicitly racialized conception of “necropolitics” of Mbembe (2003), can assist in recognizing the features of the response to the disaster and clarifying the role of sovereignty in defining the value of life in the flood zone, but also how exceptions are, paradoxically, norms that govern racialized and animalized bodies. The disaster exposes the norm through the manner in which it threatens to undo it. In turn, this has to be linked to the much longer history of the exception, extending at least to Wynter’s (1995) characterization of the Columbian encounter of 1492, and to the more recent discussions of the human-animal relation vis-à-vis race (e.g. Anderson, 2007), and recent encounters with, and critiques of, Western conceptions of the human grounded in colonial privilege.

The media discourses that emerged in the wake of Katrina provide a unique case through which to interrogate the relation between companion species and humans, as a moment of what James Carey (2009, p. 23) called the “symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed.” This function of communication is explored through examples drawn from documentary films reconstructing the plight of humans and companion species, along with related materials from the mainstream press and internet blog sources. Undoubtedly many species, “domesticated” and otherwise, were affected by the storm and its aftermath, but as Oliver and Kim point out, it was companion species on which much media discourse was focused, and which generated the most controversy, and so this is also the focus here. Analysis of examples from media materials provides insight into the production of value, particularly as it is “maintained and repaired” as part of the exercise of re-memberment (itself a project of racial and species dismemberment), and these examples are read in terms of how the animal–human relation is formulated by various actors as they appear, and speak (and speak for), in different locations, as commentators, rescuers, and victims.

This talk in and through media in turn has to be situated in the specificity of place, so I begin with a discussion of the particularity of New Orleans as a “heterotopia,” and how, in the wake of Katrina, the flood zone is transformed into what Agamben (2005) calls the “state of exception” where the issue of species treatment comes to the fore. I then turn to a discussion of companion species and what can be called their redemptive power through discursive coupling with a romantic view of nature, which then leads to an analysis of the way this

undergirds two documentaries about Katrina's animal rescue operations, *Dark Water Rising* (Shiley, 2006) and "Katrina's Animal Rescue" (Woodward, 2005). The issue of the human/nonhuman relation is then reconsidered vis-à-vis accounts of treatment of persons of color in *When the Levees Broke* (Pollard and Lee, 2006). The final example, consisting of media accounts of the dog Snowball, is examined alongside French philosopher Immanuel Levinas' encounter with the dog Bobby, providing a basis upon which to consider the broader questions of "the animal" as it has emerged in relation to contemporary formulations of the posthuman arising from postcolonial, race, and animal studies perspectives. The "contamination" of race and species in the New Orleans flood zone inflects and problematizes dominant discourses in ways that demand remembering.

### FROM DISASTER TO CATASTROPHE: THE ZONE OF EXCEPTION

Before Katrina, New Orleans was always already in the American imaginary a "ludic space, the behavioral vortex, for the rest of the nation" (Roach, 1996, p. 231), exemplified in the excesses of Mardi Gras and Bourbon Street. New Orleans functions as what Foucault (1986, p. 24) called a "heterotopia," where "all the other real sites that can be found within the culture are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted." If this space was already outside the norm as a site of sanctioned excess, Katrina shifted it into another register: the breaching of the levees undid the normative earthly order, as everything began to float. As part of a general unmooring, nothing remained in its proper place, creating, as Bench Ansfield (2015, p. 125) remarks, a space of transgression and contamination "buoying not only bodies, cars, and homes but also a matrix of multiple and contradictory understandings of disaster reflected by a question posed repeatedly and apprehensively by the media: What is in the water?" The water transformed New Orleans from a scene of designated transgression into an intolerable state of intermixing: as Ansfield writes, "the Katrina moment thus symbolized a dreadful and alarming contravention of the optimal status criterion of disciplined, gridded urbanity" (2015, p. 126).

In the disorder that undermined the "optimal status," the symbolic order is threatened by this undoing. Foucault claimed that "in civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates" (Foucault, 1986, p. 27). To be without a boat, a lifeboat, post-Katrina was a moment where dreams did ironically dry up, or more

accurately were washed away, as death was the most likely consequence. The police did take the place of pirates, and launched their boats in order to do so. Perhaps this was because there were no international waters here; rather, they augured the intolerance of indistinction that called for a human violence to match that bestowed by the storm.

This intolerance came into view as the flood waters swept away the addresses that had marked important distinctions. Nature and city were intermixed, and what Agamben (1998, pp. 8–9) calls "bare life," life bereft of politics, life that can be killed extrajudicially, emerged into visibility with the declaration of exceptional status of those trapped within the flooded areas. As Governor Kathleen Blanco put it in stark terms when calling in the National Guard: "these troops know how to shoot and kill and they are more than willing to do so if necessary, and I expect they will" ("Troops told 'shoot to kill,'" 2005). If the state of exception marks what can be killed with impunity, Blanco's statement makes abundantly clear what can be killed and by whom. The invitation to the military heralded the production of "a zone of absolute indeterminacy between anomie and law, in which the sphere of creatures and the juridical order are caught up in a single catastrophe" (Agamben, 2005, p. 57).

If the symbolic order remains the background upon which sense-making occurs in a fluid manner, the excess of fluids dissolved bonds, belying the fragility of the social order. For Susanna Hoffman (2002), disasters "demonstrate that the divisions by which the people regimented reality are illusion" (p. 115). In undoing the normal distribution of things and species, the natural event precipitates the catastrophe: the disorder calls for work to plug the (w)holes in the social order as much as, in this case, in the levees themselves. As everything either dissolved or floated away in the floodwaters, the categories of human and animal, nature and culture came undone, and so we are able to observe, in response to those conditions of radical indeterminacy, how the burst seams are stitched together again.

However, for Agamben (1998), "the state of exception...is realized *normally*" (p. 170, emphasis in original), as the "space in which bare life and the juridical rule enter into a threshold of indistinction" (p. 174). This normality is the everyday condition under which we live: "the political space of modernity itself" (p. 174). What is seemingly different here—the capacity to kill with impunity—is in fact the norm, as persons of color in the United States and elsewhere have testified for centuries. What is revealed in catastrophe is therefore not the illu-

sion of reality that anthropologists like Hoffman describe in the breakdown of the symbolic order, but rather that social norms are themselves a catastrophe. If anything, the response to the conditions in the flood zone makes visible the manner in which colonization is also characteristic of internal relations within the West itself.

If for Agamben “it is not the city but rather the camp that is the fundamental paradigm of the West” (1998, p. 181), this has to be supplemented with what Achille Mbembe (2003) calls “necropolitics.” In Mbembe’s account, “[t]he colonies are the location par excellence where the controls of judicial order can be suspended—the zone where the violence of the state of exception is deemed to operate in the service of ‘civilization’” (2003, p. 24), where sovereignty “relegate[s] the colonized into a third zone between subjecthood and objecthood” (p. 26). Here, necropolitics emerges in “the creation of *death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring on them the status of *living dead*” (p. 40), akin to Cacho’s (2012) social death. These are the internal colonial conditions that prevail(ed) in the areas of the flood zone in New Orleans which, as Ansfield (2015, p. 126) suggests, proved intolerable, as the disorder “symbolized a dreadful and alarming contravention” of the normal disciplining of species, which then initiated an explicitly violent remedy.<sup>3</sup>

### ANIMAL

The flood zone is a death-world, an interior colony in which what lives or dies, as Governor Blanco made clear, is contingent on constituting and occupying the “third zone” of the living dead, a kind of *terra nullius* produced by the hurricane that had to be recolonized. While these formulations enable us to make sense of how the flood zone is designated as an extra-judicial space, they don’t account for the way the animal operates in the production of the zone of exception. The zone between subjecthood and objecthood can be identified as the space of the animal, the species that occupy historically what Sylvia Wynter called spaces “outside grace” (da Silva, 2015, p. 94). As Tuan (1984, p. 84) has noted, depictions of Eden in the era of conquest show a garden “in which wild animals obviously have no place,” thus demarcating the distinctions between feral zones and civilization. The living dead, also outside of grace, are also subject to—or, rather, objects of—this distinction.

The animal plays a distinct role post-Katrina in the way companion species were differentiated from the generalized description of humans trapped in the zone as feral creatures. Kim’s (2015, p. 255) post-Katrina schematic sketches a tripartite hierarchy: (white) human; (domestic) animal; black people. Why did these categories become ranked in this way? We have to start back with the evolving relation between human and nonhuman animal species as it emerges in the Western conquest of space. In the first instance, the increased “taming” of natural space (typified perhaps in Tuan’s noting of Eden being represented as a *formal* garden using 17<sup>th</sup> century models), the domination of nature by humans opens upon the incorporation of nonhuman species: “the keeping of menageries,” Tuan (1984, p. 75) writes, combines “the desire for order with the desire to accommodate the heterogeneous.” Furthermore, “the safe, captive, and loyal pet reciprocally symbolized the appropriate relation between humans and nature...explicitly concerned with power and control” (Ritvo, 2008, p. 102). The pet represents the pacification of nature and its incorporation into a civil order denoted by obedience and acknowledging one’s place.

There is then a symbolic division instituted between interior and exterior, where the feral animal exists outside of grace, and the pet is inside the human order, tolerated as long as it conforms to its proper place. The appropriate relation that Ritvo describes, however, is itself further bifurcated in another way: in addition to the division of proper and improper behavior of companion species, there is also a distinction between kinds of “owners.” This hearkens back to the early debates over cruelty, and “inhumane” treatment of domesticated species, when, as Maneesha Deckha (2013) notes, a “gradual shift in societal conceptualizations of the human–nonhuman animal relationship” (p. 520) led to the “anthropomorphization and the glorification of companion animals” (p. 521) and to the characterization of animal cruelty as uncivilized and inhuman(e). The anthropomorphism pointed to our lack of “humanity” (and *not* our animality) in our dominant and destructive relation to nature that ought to be restored to address the post-lapsarian errors to which humans are prone through anthropocentrism.<sup>4</sup>

Importantly, Deckha (2013, p. 521) notes that “the early anticruelty statutes targeted what were seen to be lower-class abuses”; thus, as Ritvo (2008, p.105) observes, “even as pets were made increasingly welcome at respectable domestic hearths, the pets of the poor were castigated as symbols of their owners’ depravity.”

A class division was delineated, something, moreover, as Deckha (2013, p. 523-5) argues, that is mapped onto distinctions between civilized homeland and uncivilized colony, indicating the racial underpinnings of the distinction as well; indeed, “like so many other pathologies, animal abuse is continually represented as somehow endemic to communities of color, while aberrant and psychopathological in the case of whites” (Glick, 2013, p. 648). This gives us a sense of why the hierarchy Kim formulates (re)emerges in the context of Katrina, embedded as it is in a history in which some humans and some nonhumans are ranked according to their proximity to a construct of civility in the possession of those of a specific class and color. Harlan Weaver (2013, p. 706) shows how what he describes as the cultures of dog rescue often make “use of dogs-as-victims as a way to racialize and denigrate humans,” something that becomes evident in the texts that emerged vis-à-vis rescue operations in New Orleans post-Katrina. Companion species became entry points through which to reposition the order of species care.

If, at a certain juncture, the anthropomorphosis of the animal served as a comparator to elicit sympathy for persons of color, this is no longer the case. Bentham, with the famous question of whether the animal suffers, grounds the issue of animal cruelty in direct reference to the treatment of slaves: “the greater part of the species, under the denomination of slaves, has been treated...upon the same footing as...animals are still” (1879, p. 311). Brigitte Nichole Fiedler argues this was also the case for antebellum abolitionist tracts “that emphasized the relation between how people treat animals and how they might treat other people” (2013, p. 494). However, with regard to Oliver’s (2012, p. 494) claim of displacement—that “sympathy for Katrina’s human victims can be felt and articulated only through Katrina’s dogs”—Fiedler (2013) argues that “the widespread popular sympathy for Katrina dogs indicates that a perceived similarity is not a prerequisite for sympathy” for humans (p. 489): “The problem is not that some white people cared about Katrina dogs. It is that they did not also care about poor African American people” (pp. 488–9). This points to the shifting order Kim describes: if, as Jackson (2016, p. 123) argues, “the ‘human’ and the ‘animal’ are not mutually exclusive ontological zones but rather positions in a highly unstable and indeterminate relational hierarchy,” the conditions in the flood zone prompted responses that reorganized the hierarchy in favor of pets as Kim suggests.

## VICTIMS

We can turn to some examples from documentaries to observe how this operates. As Valerie Hartouni (2012) writes, “documentary is about *showing* rather than *analyzing*, about positioning the viewer and the real in a particular relationship that fosters recognition and identification on the one hand and a sense of moral culpability on the other.” (p. 102, emphasis in original) But it is also about speaking too, as we witness the witnesses, and so their talk also positions us as much as what is shown. Moral culpability arises less from the image per se, and more from speech that reframes the images for us, making them meaningful through discourse, doing the symbolic work of production, maintenance, and repair that Carey notes. The positioning of the viewer vis-à-vis the real is not accomplished by mere showing, but rather by how the images of the event are made into a story through the speech of those who witness and act within the environment shown in the film.

*Dark Water Rising* (Shiley, 2006) primarily documents groups of volunteers who came to New Orleans to assist with the rescue of companion species trapped in the flood zone, left behind for the most part by FEMA human rescue protocol. Those portrayed in the film were not sanctioned by organizations such as the ASPCA or Humane Society, and undertook self-organized rescue operations on their own initiative. Typical in this regard were the actions of what came to be referred to as the “Winn-Dixie Group” operating out of the parking lot of a department store of the same name. The nomination itself indicates the improvisational character of place-naming in the spatial disorganization in the aftermath of the storm, where fixed postal networks gave way to new forms of address-making corresponding to the configuration initiated by the flooding. Within this space, species relations were also remapped by humans with regard to the rescue efforts aimed at human and nonhuman animals alike.

The attitudes of the Winn-Dixie group might be likened to what Perkins (2003, p. 3) describes as a critique of human domination of nature which can lead to a “state of mind, in which human beings reject mankind...intensified by the romantic idealization of nature, of an idealized nature conceived as opposite to civilized society,” where nonhuman animals come to “incarnate a pristine innocence.” In post-Katrina New Orleans, it was arguably the collapse of civilized society that led to the extremes exemplified in the practices of some who made their way to the city to assist with animal rescues. Whether or not they idealized nature, they exhibited a

profound distrust of other than like-minded humans, particularly in the animus toward the institutions nominally charged with animal security and welfare.

The Winn-Dixie Group expressed contempt for both the SPCA and the Humane Society, claiming that they were mired in bureaucracy at the expense of the critical timeliness of animal rescue needs. As one of the group, Aaron Minjares, states, “I showed up at Lamar Dixon [Expo Center, Gonzales, Louisiana, SPCA/American Humane Society temporary animal shelter] when I first got here—fill out this form and we’ll call you in a week—and I was like, why, so I can pick up all the dead animals? I didn’t come here to get dead animals.” Beyond the frustration about delay and urgency when animal lives are at risk, we sense the resistance to institutional protocols, and the outsider identity claimed by the group. Indeed, conditions in the flood zone enabled the group to roam with impunity and act extrajudicially with respect to the nonhuman animal population. Here they tacitly claimed a privilege: as white, they had mobility and were not subject to the shoot to kill order.

Minjares distances himself from other humans later in the film, when he says “I’ve seen dead people before. Dead people don’t make me cry. When I see a dead dog or a dead animal, I cannot help it, tears well up.” The apathy toward human suffering is self-evident; Minjares is not moved by the concurrent plight of human flood victims, reflecting Fiedler’s (2013) claim of a lack of sympathy for African Americans also trapped in the zone. Jean-François Lyotard (1988) writes that “some feel more grief over damages inflicted upon an animal than over those inflicted upon a human” (p. 28); the animal elicits this response since it is incapable “of bearing witness according to the human rules for establishing damages.” Minjares takes on this role, but is emphatic in his dismissal of human suffering, to which he is not willing to bear witness: on that he remains mute. He reflects Perkins’ notion of idealized nature set over against a violent and violating culture, which in this instance invokes in turn an extrajudicial violence, effectively revictimizing the human victims. As William Freudenburg remarks of the dissolution of the social order in the wake of a disaster, “the victims can experience a second victimization, becoming participants in a socially corrosive struggle” (1997, p. 31). In this case, blame is shifted to organizations like the ASPCA as representatives of a problematic normative relation to companion species, but also away from FEMA’s culpability, onto those “owners” who had putatively abandoned their pets.

This position reserves inhuman(e) treatment for humans, as a judgement upon human behaviour toward animals, saturated with the residues of class and racial differentiation noted earlier. This was exemplified by Larry Roberts, a de facto leader of an independent group of rescuers, who exhibited disgust toward those who left their animals behind—again without acknowledging the rescue protocol that prevented animals from accompanying humans. In one scene, after the group rescues a dog trapped in a house, Roberts removes the dog’s collar and identification tags, and says “Let me take this piece of shit off you...let’s put this on your owner when they get back.” He then flings the collar away.<sup>5</sup> As Roberts readies to return to the improvised intake center, he remarks of the “owner”: “they’re a piece of shit; they will always be a piece of shit.” As the film makes clear, Roberts deliberately obfuscates with regard to the location of the animals in order to frustrate attempts to reunite animals with their companions (something both the SPCA and the AHS were intent on achieving, in the face of the deliberate separation of pets and families in the rescue operations).<sup>6</sup> Roberts has no sympathy with the plight of those who had to abandon the animals, and uses the animals’ conditions as evidence for the incapacity of *all* people to act as wards for animals.

“Katrina’s Animal Rescue” (Woodward, 2005) takes a very different approach. Narrator Laura Dern describes Katrina as “the worst animal disaster in United States history,” but claiming “the commitment, the compassion of a band of rescuers, unusual partners, and unlikely heroes prevailed,” here primarily in terms of reuniting members of companion species with families. Both documentaries portray their central characters as heroic, but “Katrina’s Animal Rescue” contrasts *Dark Water’s* outliers with a focus on the institutional order, lauding the work of the SPCA and AHS. *Dark Water* portrays a radical disenchanting attitude embodied in the groups operating outside the law, enabled precisely in the manner the flood zone becomes extra-judicial in Agamben’s sense, hinting at a darker misanthropic posture. “Katrina’s Animal Rescue” takes another tack: this film foregrounds the normative notion of a human/nonhuman animal bond, describing the loneliness of animals without people, viewing the pet as a family member. Unlike *Dark Water*, the stories and characters in “Katrina’s Animal Rescue” are concerned with what Ritvo (2008) calls an “appropriate relation” to companion species, eliding the problematic issues affecting both human and nonhuman animals trapped in the zone. Early in the episode, Dern states that “rescuers had to put

human lives first,” effectively justifying the exclusion of companion species from rescue. In line with its institutional orientation the program praises the National Guard, the Army, and FEMA, even though, as Jane Garrison of the Humane Society says in the episode, “we need the government to stop telling people that they cannot evacuate with their animals. They need to recognize that these animals are people’s families...and those are the two biggest lessons that have to be learned from this disaster.” Minjares or Roberts were obviously not interested in those lessons, as they viewed rescue as a means to save animals *from* their families.

The distinct orientations are in part due to the different conditions of production. *Dark Water* was made independently, whereas “Katrina’s Animal Rescue” was produced under the auspices of the *Nature* series on PBS. The latter also included segments about the Audubon Zoo and the Aquarium of the Americas, again orienting to institutional forms of animal stewardship and exhibition (while ignoring the impact of Katrina on factory farm animal populations along the Gulf coast). By focusing on these sites, and the efforts of the ASPCA and Humane Societies, “Katrina’s Animal Rescue” reproduces in myriad ways a normative order of the human/nonhuman animal relation, as described by Deckha and Ritvo, imbued with a kind of propriety, deploying institutional and governmental agencies in order to restore the “appropriate relation” guided by tenets that return “the animal” to its rightful place.

*Dark Water* director Shiley, on the other hand, orients us in a different direction by operating beyond the bounds of institutional frameworks. The lawlessness of the zone that produced animals subject to extrajudicial sanction also enabled Minjares, Roberts, and others to exercise a privileged freedom of mobility to operate in an extra-legal manner. Here, an alternative order of things could emerge in an unanticipated form of social organization, where otherwise latent hostilities toward forms of normal social and species relations could be expressed, notably in the rejection of the appropriate relation with nonhuman species: where, as Roberts says, “the Humane Society stinks and so does the SPCA...They’re not doing anything, they’re just useless.” Here there is an alternative image of the human unlike the unlikely heroes of “Katrina’s Animal Rescue.”

Moreover, unlike the latter’s relentless happy endings, *Dark Water* does not recoil from showing graphic images of desiccation and death. One of the most disturbing scenes concerns what appeared to be a mass slaughter of dogs in a high school in St. Bernard that

had been used as a refuge. Notes left behind indicate that the people had been forced to leave the animals when rescuers arrived. The spent ammunition found littering the floors was described as “tactical,” issued to St. Bernard Sherriff’s deputies. This points precisely to the capacity to kill with impunity that marks the state of exception, in which all forms of life are subject to extrajudicial forms of death. By itself working outside the law, the film also exposes the manner in which sovereign power also operates outside the law under the conditions such as prevailed in the flood zone. Arguably, by working within sanctioned parameters, this represents the blind spot of “Katrina’s Animal Rescue.”

In both documentaries there is a shared emphasis on sacrifice, where those who participated in the animal rescue operations—whether institutionally sanctioned or otherwise—heeded some sort of call, and abandoned their daily lives to travel at whatever distance and cost to become the “unlikely heroes” lauded as exemplary in their commitments to interspecies care. However, this privilege—to utilize catastrophe as an opportunity, a kind of *tabula rasa*—differed starkly from the conditions of humans and nonhumans trapped in the zone. These individuals were almost exclusively white, and their resources and mobility—and “sacrifice”—has to be contrasted with those species seeking ways *out* of the flood zone. They were often not only trapped by circumstances, but also actively denied exit; those fortunate to be rescued were not entered into a program that sought to reunite them with families, as was the case with the SPCA/AHS efforts to reunite animals with their families: they were forcibly deported and dispersed on buses and planes to destinations not of their choosing.<sup>7</sup> As the animal rescuers sought to institute an ethical-political discourse that worked to iterate a “humanized” care, the (non-white) human population in the zone was more often than not rendered outside the political, “dehumanized,” and treated like animals: those animals that do not conform to the appropriate relation; those animals, as Glick (2013) describes, that are “beyond redemption—disposable, euthanizable.” (pp. 647–8)

### BAD ANIMALS

“Katrina’s Animal Rescue” describes animals as the “flood victims who were left behind,” effectively eliding the human flood victims, who were also, as the DVD liner notes describe, “stranded on rooftops, left locked in their homes, or out on the streets.” These people are eerily missing here and in *Dark Water*, where it seems the film crews for the animal rescue documentaries were

working in an entirely different city, one devoid of any humans other than the rescuers themselves. The crews operated in areas where humans had either fled or been evacuated (or were dead in their homes), but this creates a false impression, since many humans lacked the resources to leave, did not want to leave, or were trapped as a result of unanticipated flooding and the woefully inadequate rescue efforts. The division of labor that produces this lacuna underscores the differentiation in species treatment, and functions effectively to differentiate between different kinds of humans. The latter became not so much, as Kim argues, less than animal, but rather a different kind of animal, one that is, as Glick notes, unredeemable. If there are two kinds of humans, those with an appropriate or inappropriate relation to animals, there are also two kinds of animals, the loyal pet and the feral menace, and these categories prop up the system of necropolitics.

If the animal rescue documentaries are mostly devoid of humans, the films about people are in turn lacking in specific reference to the nonhuman populations in the zone, but the figure of the animal is nevertheless central, the name for the status to which human victims are reduced, doubly victimizing them. As Freudenburg (1997, p. 31) argues, in the wake of disaster human victims are often blamed for it: “Rather than working cooperatively to deal with problems that were “nobody’s fault” and that resulted from natural processes, the victims can experience a second victimization,” as seemed to be the case with what the *New York Times* (Carr, 2005) called the “lurid libretto” of media portrayals of the humans in the flood zone as potentially irredeemable prowlers and looters, or of those trapped in the squalid conditions that prevailed in the Superdome assembly area as marauding bands of baby rapists.<sup>8</sup> If there are, according to Freudenburg (1997), “actions that threaten the very system of agreed-upon meanings that allow a social system to function” (p. 34), the question arises as to whether that system is not always already victimizing the victims, where re-victimization is in effect merely another iteration of already existing victimhood, in the manner delineated by Agamben and Mbembe. Where Freudenburg goes astray is with a tacit assumption that the “very system of agreed-upon meanings” is in any way equitable *prior* to any disaster.

If, as in Governor Blanco’s statement, anxieties about the feral character of humans gave rise to the sanction of killing by an external, civil force, arguably this was a continuation of an already existing order of police impunity as part of a “deeper structure that con-

tinually reproduces that impunity in different forms” (Martinot, 2003, p. 222). In New Orleans, the already existing internal divisions in the city explicitly demarcated the civil zones from those where order had literally washed away in the water. This is dramatized in the recounting of the unspooling of the veneer of civility in the aftermath of the storm by persons of color in *When the Levees Broke* (Pollard & Lee, 2006). Explicit throughout is the recurring emphasis on differential treatment, particularly with the demarcation of the zone of exclusion where those trapped inside were subject to extrajudicial violence, both symbolic and physical.

One example that stands out is the recounting of the blockade of the Pontchartrain Bridge over the Mississippi River to Gretna. People attempting to walk across the bridge were met with a line of armed police and citizens who refused to let them cross. Eerie here is the resonance with the police lining up against civil rights marchers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama in 1965. What this made clear was the defense of the boundary between civilization and nature, and how those on the other side were viewed as feral beings, as lawless “thugs” illustrating that “black presence is by definition a lethal threat” (Kim, 2017, p. 7).<sup>9</sup> Indeed as Vanita Gupta of the NAACP pointed out in the film, when authorities used the word “thug,” “they were clearly talking about African-American citizens of New Orleans...it was a race thing.” Commenting on Razack’s (2008, p. 10) argument that “the non-West occupies a zone outside the law,” Deckha (2010, p. 38) states: “Once placed outside the ‘human’ zone by race thinking, the detainees may be handled lawlessly and thus with violence that is legitimated at all times.” Here, however, we see how this “outside” zone is reproduced *inside*, where the “non-West” within is made visible under the conditions of catastrophe, where there were no unlikely heroes.

As Louisiana State Representative Karen Carter commented on the differential treatment of African Americans in the wake of the storm, “I thought I lived in America until shortly after Katrina” (Pollard & Lee, 2006). The question of course raised by this comment is whether this *is actually* the state of living in America, which would certainly be true if we agree with Kim in what she describes as “restitching the negrophobic social fabric by reopening the question of black-animal nearness” that occurred where Katrina had undone the seams (Kim, 2017, p. 11). White survivor Henry Morgan of St. Bernard Parish made this explicit in describing an encounter with a group of black flood victims during his



family's exodus: "we wound up underneath the underpass [Interstate-10?] with a handful of—not niggers—but animals." Exposed here is an extraordinary hierarchy, where an extremely controversial racial epithet stands for a social position somewhere above that of animal, suggesting that, while deeply derogatory, it nevertheless occupies the space of the human, over against which the animal designation stands as the nadir. This provides a succinct illustration of the emergent post-Katrina hierarchical schema Kim (2015, p. 284) describes. The designation also pointed, as Carter implies, to a loss of citizenship, with its subhuman connotations, linked often to slavery, but also to the status of the refugee: "What kind of shit is that?" one commentator asks: "when the storm came in, that blew away our citizenship, too?...I thought that was folks who didn't have a country." What stands out here is the "too?" that implicitly signals a continual state of loss linked to entrenched discrimination (woefully captured in Morgan's cry) in which the stakes of citizenship and inequality are always already in question.

In the scenes at the Superdome, the collection points for transport out of the zone, and the chaos within the zone, the collapse of the infrastructure of the normative order laid bare the fraught relations in the city that had always already been there. What remained latent, if nevertheless prevalent, before the event was an intra-species order that became manifest in the language and actions that were enabled by the situation of indistinction, if in a different manner vis-à-vis humans than with respect to nonhuman animals. Nevertheless, it might be claimed that this difference masked an indifference, where intra-species treatment was indistinct from inter-species treatment, where all living creatures in the zone became animals, Razack's non-West emerging in the interior, pointing to the way in which "we find ourselves virtually in the presence of a camp every time such a structure is created, independent of the kinds of crimes that are committed there and whatever its denomination and specific topography" (Agamben, 1998, p. 174).

### BECOMING HUMAN/BECOMING ANIMAL

These documentaries move along an odd asymptotic trajectory. Certainly, they come near convergence with regard to the evident wretched conditions and treatment of all species that were trapped in the zone. What remained and remains problematic, however, is the divergence of species treatment: humans condemned to death for the sake of animals, and animals condemned to

death for the sake of humans, as if there were some principle of mutual exclusion that prevented them being taken and taken up together.

We can take the case of Snowball the dog as an invitation to consider the wider issue of distinction and indistinction that brings to light questions about the definition of the human, and how that problematically haunts the relation to the nonhuman animal. This becomes highly visible in the controversy over FEMA's refusal to allow animal evacuation alongside humans. Snowball, as reported by Mary Foster of the Associated Press, was a dog that was taken from a small boy evacuated from the Superdome stadium assembly site. As Foster (2005) wrote, "when a police officer confiscated a little boy's dog, the child cried until he vomited. 'Snowball Snowball' he cried." This appeared at the bottom of the second paragraph of a lengthy story about the chaotic conditions at the Superdome and the New Orleans Convention Center. It was, however, those lines that generated the most interest ("Sad story of little boy," 2005); Timothy Noah in *Slate* noted that "the reluctance of rescuers to allow refugees from the city to bring their animals with them received thunderous condemnation" (Noah, September 12, 2005).<sup>10</sup>

This outcry led eventually to the legislation known as "PETS": The *Pets Evacuation and Transport Standards Act* (2006), which required states seeking federal emergency relief funding to make provision for the evacuation of household pets and service animals. As Congressman Tom Lantos stated, "the dog was taken away from this little boy, and to watch his face was a singularly revealing and tragic experience. The legislation was born at that moment" (Pace, 2006). The law aimed to prevent scenes like those described by Foster and Congressman Lantos from occurring again in subsequent disaster relief operations.

There appears to be progress here, where the animal gets a seat alongside the human, acknowledging companion species deserved rescue as much as their "owners." On the other hand, the textual silence on the transformation of human victims into refugees, resulting in forced deportation and incarceration, ignores the withdrawal of basic rights presumed to be the possession of American citizens. As Noah comments: "It's entirely consistent with the warped priorities of this sob story that in its telling, the *human being's* identity is judged less salient than the pooch's." (September 12, 2005, emphasis in original) In a subsequent column on the PETS legislation, Noah noted the considerable ire this comment roused, and wondered "whether the American

public found it easier to feel sympathy for dogs and cats than for low-income black people.” (September 22, 2005) The discourse thus became stuck on this question of saliency, as noted earlier in Kim (2015) and Oliver (2012).

The law is not really oriented toward the animal in any strong sense: the child might have been crying for a lost toy—or a lost relative even—and not necessarily an animal. The animal’s welfare is not necessarily at stake; rather it is the human anguish that the legislation takes up: the boy’s grief and loss, not that of the animal. It is about something taken away, as Lantos clearly states, and so it is the human bereft of a thing that prompts the sympathy, and about a human “right” to private ownership and so is rather one-sided, as it takes no account of the animal in the relation; the animal is only significant insofar as its absence produces a human discomfort (and, as Noah suggests, belies a lack of discomfort about the discomfort of other people).

This brings to light the question of the ethical bond, and in that light, another dog, Bobby, who appears in Fallingbomel labor camp where Levinas was interned as a POW in 1940, described in an essay where Levinas (1990) is “thinking of Bobby,” the dog with “neither ethics nor *logos*” (pp. 151, 152). If, according to Agamben, the camp is the paradigm for life today, Bobby and Snowball and Levinas and the little boy share a similar space as fellow animals. Here the confusion of animal and human appears, and the encounters with Bobby and Snowball mark the limit of a way of thinking, a discourse that cannot think the animal and human together.

Levinas (1990, p. 153) remarks that in the camp, “we were subhuman, a gang of apes” and asks: “How can we deliver a message about our humanity...which will come across as anything other than monkey talk?” Llewelyn (1991b), as David Clark emphasizes, has shown that “in the metaphysical ethics of Levinas I can have direct responsibilities only toward beings that speak” (Clark, 2004, p. 66), and so “monkey talk” marks the exclusion from the ethical. Not possessing speech signifies (in its silence or apish babble) the subhuman, a state in which Levinas’ prime human directive, “thou shall not kill,” does not apply. Derrida (2008), Clark and Llewelyn discuss at length with respect to Levinas and others the distinction between killing and murder, pointing out that, for many, animals cannot be murdered, and therefore as animals the inmates are placed outside crime, and subject to the sovereign power that rules the camp, precisely as in the flood zone of New Orleans.

As Clark (2004) writes, “like some strange, reversed *pharmakos*, Bobby is cast *into* (not out of) the mock-polis of the camp, restoring it – albeit momentarily – to a semblance of ethical ‘health’” (p. 43). Normally, the *pharmakos* is the sacrificial victim who is expunged to purify the community; the *pharmakoi* here are in fact the camp inmates, who have been expelled from society, and as Jews made to bear the blame for European society’s ills. The reduction to bare life provides the basis upon which this can be operationalized. For the men-as-animals—apes in this case—the dog acts as more of a *pharmakon* in a restorative sense (a healing drug rather than as a poison); for Bobby, as Levinas (1990) writes, “there was no doubt that we were men” (p. 153). In the world in which Levinas is incarcerated only the dog is left to show some kind of human affection. Nevertheless, as Llewelyn (1991b, p. 58) points out, Levinas is “sensitive to the dangers of the *Schwärmerei* [fanaticism; excessive sentimentality] threatened by what Kant calls pathological love.” Noah similarly questions the sentimentality of those who reacted to his criticism of people’s priorities vis-à-vis Snowball. Levinas does not succumb since, as he writes, even if “this dog was the last Kantian in Nazi Germany,” he was “without the brain needed to universalize maxims” and so excluded from the ethical community (1990, p. 153). Even if, as Levinas has said, “it is via the face that one understands, for example, a dog,” he immediately goes on, “yet the priority here is not found in the animal but in the human face” (Wright, Hughes, & Ainley, 1988, p. 169). Of course, one might want to ask why, but this is never explained.<sup>11</sup>

We can treat Levinas as representing the strong version of differentiation between animal and human that preoccupies Western thought. Derrida situates Levinas and others within a post-war context oriented to “validating a new *fundamental* anthropology and of rigorously responding to the question and answering *for* the question ‘what is the human?’” (2008, p. 127, emphasis in original). Indeed, Levinas (Wright, Hughes, & Ainley, 1988) situates his discussion of the animal in a later interview vis-à-vis Darwin and Heidegger, where species-being is a “struggle for life without ethics,” and so differentiated from the human: animals are *weltarm*—“world-poor”—as Heidegger says, in between the “world-less-ness” of a stone and the human as “world-forming” (*weltbilden*) (see Derrida 2008, pp. 143-60 passim). All of this confirms the thesis that neither Snowball nor Bobby share in the human world, and that this division haunts human thought as a specter of a potential slippage of one, as was the case in the camp and af-

ter Katrina, into the other. As Clark (2004) argues, “we see at least one reason why Levinas is so nervous about the prospect of anthropomorphizing Bobby: the sentimental humanization of animals and the brutal animalization of humans are two sides of the same assimilating gesture” (p. 44).

It is this threat of assimilation that marks the work in the commentary about Snowball in the same manner that Bobby is differentiated, where both are restored as it were to their proper places, alongside but unlike humans. The documentaries discussed above likewise seek some sort of restoration of proper places, notably in the differentiation of species, as they move in one direction or the other away from the threat that assimilation seems to represent. Each seeks to work out, in light of the seemingly intolerable situation of intermixing created by the flood, a symbolic repair of an appropriate relation that would re-establish difference over against the specter of de-differentiation.

### POSTHUMANS

All of this is to point to the manner in which the figure of pollution hovers over the discourse, where “the geo-racial poetics of filth continues to shape dominant conceptions of subaltern spaces and bodies” (Ansfield, 2015, p. 132). Further, as Ansfield writes, “these spaces define and are defined by the antihumans who are located in or mapped to them.” (p. 135) This hinges on the appropriate relation, where there is an order of both proximity and implacable distance between the human and nonhuman animal, and the threat of contamination triggers the kinds of responses we observe both in relation to the water out of place in Katrina, and the animal in ethical philosophies.<sup>12</sup>

The shadow of ambiguity may be symptomatically read off of the strenuousness of the efforts to distinguish human and animal that engenders an enduring history of racial violence where the black bodies post-Katrina are, aside from being victims of the flood, doubly victims of the systematic, racialized violence inflicted upon them. By defining these bodies as inherently violent, as Kim (2017) argues is always already the case, the violence perpetrated upon them is disavowed, while at the same time sanctioning extra-judicial violence as the means by which to extinguish the threat they represent. Clark (2004, p. 68) suggests that “It may well be that, as long as animals are quiet, as long as they remain speechless and stupid, they will be allowed into the neighborhood of the human—but always under the threat of deportation,” and perhaps that also sums up better than

anything the cases of the humans in the flood zone. If the off-the-grid animal rescuers spoke on the one side where the disorder evoked a fantasy of prelapsarian species treatment rid of stupid humans, on the other side the “gang of apes,” the antihumans without a voice, were deported.

The struggle of people of color to “obtain” humanity and subjectivity is often characterized as an overcoming of the animal status ascribed to non-white persons, as recurred visibly post-Katrina. For example, *Feministe* blogger Renee (August 26, 2009) noted that “for centuries POC have been compared to animals, as a way to dehumanize us. Telling POC that we are the same as animals cannot be taken in a positive light.” Her polemic was aimed primarily at PETA, whom she accuses of reducing people to animals. Certainly PETA (<https://www.peta.org>) formulates an equation of identity: “a rat is a pig is a dog is a boy,” as the website states, citing the supposed similarities to which Renee objects. Whatever the accuracy of her criticism, she points to the historical and ongoing distinctions that differentiate, or rather dedifferentiate between human and non-human on an intra-species level by characterizing some as (mere) animal. Here Clark and Renee are in complete agreement: “In humanizing the animal, these [anthropomorphic] fictions risk the tropological reversal by which persons are in turn bestialized” (Clark, 2004, p. 44).

As Theodor Adorno (1998) once wrote, “animals play for the idealist system virtually the same role as the Jews for fascism. To revile man as animal—that is genuine idealism” (p. 80). This is perhaps most visible in the unsettling PETA campaigns comparing animal treatment with the Holocaust and African American slavery. If “the Jewish experience and the black ascent from slavery...[are] the two iconic narratives of suffering and redemption in the twentieth century,” the campaigns “challenge the sacrosanct moral divide between humans and animals...between what are normally seen as separate and hierarchically ordered categories of beings” (Kim, 2011, pp. 312, 313). The controversy consists precisely in this challenge to the idealist pose, which is put into question by Adorno and PETA both. The problem with this position, however, is the presumption of stable categories that differentiate sharply between human and nonhuman (animal).

As Carey Wolfe (2003) notes, at a certain juncture, the notion of a stable human subject began to falter. Although this provided an opening to reconsider the human, “theorizing the subject as “nothing in particular”

could easily look like just another sign of the very privilege and mobility enjoyed by those who were quite locatable on the social ladder—namely at the top” (p. xii). The problem, Wolfe argues, is that “it often reinscribes the very humanism it appears to unsettle...one that constitutes its own repression...of the question of the animal” (ibid.).<sup>13</sup> Renee and others thus have a point, if the posthuman perspective reinscribes the hierarchy that maintains the appropriate relation. As Agamben (2004) writes, “perhaps the body of the anthropophorous animal (the body of the slave) is the unresolved remnant that idealism leaves as an inheritance to thought, and the aporias of the philosophy of our time coincide with the aporias of this body that is irreducibly drawn and divided between animality and humanity” (p. 12).

It is this irresolution, and the aporias (the indistinction between animal and human), that prompt the posthumanisms of Wolfe and others to address the return of the (animal) repressed. The problem represented by Renee’s demand is that the idealist conception of the human she desires is precisely the category that operates to deny her equality through the uncoupling of animal and human. Some years ago, Marjorie Spiegel (1996, p. 32) alerted us to the entwinement of the domination of animals and persons of color (much as Bentham had), and that oppression (or its end) of one is proportional to the other. Following from this, Kim argues that “race cannot be unsutured from species,” and so “the effort to gain full humanity by distancing from nonhuman animals...is a misbegotten project” (2015, p. 286). This posthumanism is not merely formal, as in the case Wolfe refers to, but addresses fundamental inequalities that persist in class and race privilege by linking them with animal oppression. As the Ko sisters argue, rather than decrying concern for animals over persons of color, anti-racist positions must recognize that the structures of animal oppression and human oppression have to be thought together as stemming from the same conditions. Stated bluntly by Aph Ko (2017, “Bringing Our Digital Mops Home,” para. 17), “we *shouldn’t* compare black oppression to animal oppression because they aren’t ‘like’ each other; they just have a common source of oppression which is white human violence.” Therefore, according to Syl Ko (2017, “Revaluing the Human,” para. 30), “the challenge to humanity is a challenge to the [human/animal] binary.”<sup>14</sup> Finally, as Kay Anderson (2007, p. 199, emphasis in original) puts it:

The exclusion of inferiorised [sic] people from humanity has not *in itself* been the problem, as presumed by standard liberal race critique. It is

not an issue of extending humanity to such negatively racialised people, but of *putting into question that from which such people have been excluded*—that which, for liberal discourse remains unproblematized.

The extent, however, to which this exclusion is still enforced is evident in the excess of responses to the potentials of contamination represented by the New Orleans flood zone. The examples above speak to both liberal and illiberal reactions to the conditions, particularly to the operations of the security apparatus to reinforce distinctions wherever they threatened to dissolve. Ahuja (2016, p. 7) argues that security “masquerades as an apolitical good...allowing the disavowal of security as an agent of inequality of mobility and accumulation,” and works to “securitize privileged forms of circulation against the queer potentials of interspecies contact” (p. 195). Certainly, “Katrina’s Animal Rescue” does this work, lauding both the work of the security services in the zone, and reinforcing the appropriate relation; *Dark Water*, on the other hand, is a kind of queering of the discourse, but nevertheless is still dependent upon privileged forms of white mobility, and continues to reinforce the human/nonhuman distinction.

If, as Ahuja (2016) argues, “race is fluid,” the fluids in New Orleans gave form, as he puts it, to insecurity “emergent in the crises of interspecies contact that generate politics” (p. 195). The kill order stands as the signature of this insecurity vis-à-vis the contamination of the flood, the designation of life inside the zone as potentially irredeemable, and the moment where politics actually vanishes. As witnessed in *When the Levees Broke*, those trapped in the zone were no longer citizens but, at best, refugees, and hence stateless, and so subjected only to the rule of the camp. Oliver (2012) is incorrect to argue that “black men can be ‘rounded up and killed’ only as part of the moral community,” unlike their dogs (p. 494). The continued impunity of police points to the longer history described by Martinot (2003) of extrajudicially sanctioned killing of black persons both before and after Katrina.

According to Kim (2015, p. 286), “[t]he Hurricane Katrina story is one of gross racial injustices layered on top of one another all the way down...a spectacular technicolor retort to white delusions about postraciality.” The post-Katrina media reconstructions described here make visible the blind spots of what Anderson calls a liberal discourse, and reveal the persistence of a deeply held disgust of the species intermixing, Ansfield’s “geo-racial poetics of filth.” Here, in- and unhuman meet

nonhuman. The response is the restoration of what Ritvo called the appropriate relation, in which the subaltern—whether human or nonhuman—knows its place, or, as bad animals, is deported or euthanized. Oliver is thus right to say: “Animals come to represent the limits of the moral community, either as monsters or beasts who are too cruel to be included in the moral or civil law...or too childlike or naïve to be included” (Oliver, 2012, p. 495), and so when these limits appear to be transgressed, as is the case in catastrophe that weakens the symbolic order, the places where this occurs “within the dominant system of symbolic representation defiled geographies holding and containing contagious bodies are terra nullius/no man’s land” (Ansfield, 2015, p. 135), and thus outside of the judicial order.

The media work of symbolic maintenance and repair explored here functions as a re-memberment in different ways, trying to stitch together a (w)hole that would reseal the loss of value that is the catastrophe, along the (aporetic) border between animal and human. Value, suggests Barrett (2009, p. 128), “inevitably remembers itself by dismembering the Other;” and this is the scene that unfolds in the texts and images that portray Katrina as violence, which disavows the fact that violence has no natural origin, and for which, as Cacho noted, Katrina is only the cover story. Coverage is perhaps a double work here, both to remap the territory, but also to cover it over, and seal off the contaminants. The leakage of the water is also a leakage in the symbolic order, which exposes its continual reproduction of the appropriate relation, constantly reinventing a hierarchy that, despite counter-discourses, organizes the normative through the entwinement of species. The counterproject, says Barrett, is to re-member the Other by dismembering value. Katrina briefly exposed the contingent character of value, as well as the violence it entails, as sovereign power restores the status quo ante. If there are, as Ahuja suggests (2016, p. 195), “queer potentials of interspecies contact” in forms of what we might call inappropriate relations, the slippages that appeared find their potential in the possibility of other contingencies where what had been dismembered could be re-membered in alternate forms.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Initial research was funded by an Operating Grant from Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to K. Dowler, Communication Studies, DB 3020, York University, 4700

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<sup>2</sup> As Cacho (2012, “Introduction,” para. 12) writes, for social groups “*ineligible for personhood*—as populations subjected to laws but refused the legal means to contest those laws...to be ineligible for personhood is a form of social death.” This dismemberment is similar to that of Agamben’s “bare life” and Mbembe’s “death worlds” discussed below.

<sup>3</sup> It would be worthwhile, space permitting, to reflect on Aimé Césaire’s remark that what the “Christian bourgeois...cannot forgive Hitler for is not *crime* in itself...it is the crime against the white man...and the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the coolies of India, and the blacks of Africa” (1995, p. 164). Thus Agamben’s “camp” paradigm would have to be mediated by colonial form (though this is, in the historical literature, controversial; for discussion see for example Levene (2005) and Wachsmann (2015).

<sup>4</sup> However, as Deckha (2013, p. 521) points out, what was criticized was “the suffering of animals but not their exploitation,” and in the end, “the normalized institutional exploitation of animals continues unabated” (p. 538).

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps unknowingly, Roberts misses the symbolic character of this act vis-à-vis the shackling and collaring of slaves, and thus the racial implications of putting it on the animal’s owner.

<sup>6</sup> Another documentary, *Mine* (Pezanoski, 2009), portrays the struggle, affecting primarily people of color from the flood zone, of “owners” to reclaim their pets who had been put up for adoption.

<sup>7</sup> As one witness noted in *When the Levees Broke* (Pollard & Lee, 2006), “People have been dispersed to forty-four different states...with one-way tickets. There’s no clear discussion or debate...about how to get them back.”

<sup>8</sup> The *New York Times* reported that “appearing on ‘Oprah’ on Sept. 6, Chief Eddie Compass said of the Superdome: ‘We had little babies in there, some of the little babies getting raped.’” This was part of what the *Times* called “the lurid libretto” of media portrayals, most of which, like the one above, were unfounded (see Carr, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> See also Cacho’s analysis of media images and descriptions that differentiated between black “looters” and white “finders” (2012, “Introduction,” para. 1–6).

<sup>10</sup> What also deserves attention here is the casual use of term “refugees,” also used by Foster in her article. As noted earlier, comments by victims in the films refer to their sense of becoming stateless, seemingly, if perhaps unwittingly, reinforced by this descriptor for their plight. Cacho (2012) also draws attention to this term and its usage in this context (“Introduction,” para. 30–37).

<sup>11</sup> Llewelyn (1991b, p. 58) argues it is because speech is required: “No claim goes without saying, even if the saying is the silent saying of the discourse of the [*human*] face.”

<sup>12</sup> For a systematic discussion of the shortcomings of Levinas, Derrida and others vis-à-vis the animal, see Cavalieri (2008).

<sup>13</sup> For a fuller account of this repression, see again Cavalieri (2008).

<sup>14</sup> See also Jackson (2013) for a review of some of the literature challenging this binary.

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