

University of Hawai'i – West O'ahu DSpace Submission

<i>CITATION</i>	Carmen Nolte-Odhiambo (2019) <i>From Aetotemporal Becomings to Petophilic Hospitality: Liminal Pet and Child Figures</i> , Parallax, 25:4, 412-426, DOI: 10.1080/13534645.2020.1731009
<i>AS PUBLISHED</i>	https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2020.1731009
<i>PUBLISHER</i>	Taylor & Francis Online
<i>VERSION</i>	Modified from original published version to conform to ADA standards.
<i>CITABLE LINK</i>	http://hdl.handle.net/10790/5289
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<i>ADDITIONAL NOTES</i>	

From Aetotemporal Becomings to Petophilic Hospitality: Liminal Pet and Child Figures

Carmen Nolte-Odhiambo

Giorgio Agamben identifies the process of separating the human from the animal, a mechanism he terms the ‘anthropological machine of humanism’, as foundational to Western thought and contemporary biopolitics since it is this process that generates the properly human: ‘Anthropogenesis is what results from the caesura and articulation between human and animal’.ⁱ Yet because the human/animal separation is neither stable nor particular but instead articulates divisions that are always wavering and multiple, this human created via the anthropological machine is, as ‘the place – and, at the same time, the result – of ceaseless divisions and caesurae’, fundamentally precarious.ⁱⁱ The ways in which caesurae birth anthropogenesis speak to Jacques Derrida’s discussion of limitrophy, which does not focus on obliterating the border between human and animal but is invested ‘in multiplying its figures, in complicating, thickening, delinearizing, folding, and dividing the line precisely by making it increase and multiply’.ⁱⁱⁱ Derrida is intent on demonstrating the infinite heterogeneity found on the side of ‘the animal’ as well as the side of ‘the human’ (and at the numerous thresholds in between) that makes any attempt at a neat human/animal division ultimately impossible.

Derrida’s interest in the liminal propels my analysis of the pet and the child which, as boundary-crossing figures, are situated at the edges of the animal and the human, swerving between buttressing and obstructing the unflagging gears of the anthropological machine. In following the pet and the child around, I map the uses to which these figures have been discursively put in separating inside from outside, normativity from queerness, and (re)productive time from non-teleological temporalities, noting especially the multifarious moments in which they subvert binary modes of thinking. Taking inspiration from Derrida’s investigation of what constructions of ‘the animal’ reveal about the often contradictory and presumptuous ways in which the human defines himself over and against others, my argument pursues possible paths toward answering two guiding questions: What do the pet and the child, respectively and as co-constituted figures, tell us about anthropogenesis? How can both function as deconstructive figures that lay bare the performative dimensions of speciesism and adultism?

Bolstering the anthropological machine which disavows the human’s precariousness by displacing it onto others, the pet and the child are fundamentally vulnerable, infantilized and silenced so as to allow ‘proper’ humanity to come into being.^{iv} Letting pets and children ‘speak’

would hence require abandoning hierarchical conceptions of ‘the human’ by halting the anthropological machine and, as Agamben has it, ‘risk[ing] ourselves in this emptiness’.^v Intimately listening to these silenced others necessitates that we refrain from using pets and children as means for human self-definition, and it opens up a horizon of non-teleological relations. Envisioning this horizon is crucial at this current anthropocentric moment, characterized as it is by the threat of environmental apocalypse and demanding that humanity recognize ‘its own vulnerability, and dependence upon an environment that increasingly pushes back against the human’.^{vi} Ultimately, in an effort to move toward the non-anthropocentric horizon, my discussion of ‘the pet’ and ‘the child’ aims to illustrate the need for an ethics of singularities that foregrounds the specificities of encounters with the individual subjects housed under these two umbrellas of alterity. Such an ethics, I propose, must be grounded in what I call ‘petophilic hospitality’: a mode of caring for pets and children that is fully present instead of future- and end-oriented, based not on categorical imperatives or homogenizing abstractions but on open-ended proximities and multivalent intimacies.

It is pertinent to note that several prominent scholars in the field of animal studies have resisted the frequent cultural alignments of pets and children. Donna Haraway, for instance, is troubled by the anthropocentrism underlying the understanding of pets as ‘fantasy children in fur coats’,^{vii} whereas Erica Fudge observes how terms such as ‘fur baby’ buttress the infantilization of pets.^{viii} Even as these scholars point out the disconcerting effects of treating pets like (pseudo-)children, their comments also speak to the pervasiveness of such treatment in the discourse on pethood that informs our interactions with these animal others. As humans give a proper name to and create kinship relations with a pet, the animal is rendered childlike, and the structures of power and care that are established create interspecies affective economies reliant on the animal’s status as ‘becoming-child’. What distinguishes the pet from other nonhuman animals, then, is precisely that it is invited into the company of humans as a childlike figure. The fact that the child, too, occupies a position of alterity vis-à-vis the adult human makes palpable the implications of pet-child alignments for anthropogenesis, as the caesurae of the anthropological machine capture and fracture both the pet, as a humanized animal, and the child, as an animalized human. In this in-between space to which the pet and the child are relegated, both are denied the human adult’s full-fledged subjecthood as well as the unadulterated wildness ascribed to raw animality. Simultaneously included in and excluded from the realms of both ‘the human’ and ‘the animal’, the pet and the child illustrate the workings of the anthropological machine even as they trouble its cogs.

I. Aetotemporality

The ways in which pethood and childhood both inform and trouble each other are particularly poignant in the realm of temporality. The child, as a figure that paradoxically stands in for all of humankind while being denied full enfranchisement as a subject, ‘has been theorized in terms of a past from which the child will soon develop into the adult; in terms of the projected time of future adulthood; or in a timeless mythical state of innocence, ignorance, and purity’.^{ix} It is this third theorization of the child that significantly also captures the figure of the pet; whereas the human child is expected to eventually grow out of the temporary condition of childhood in specific prescribed ways, the pet remains forever in its liminal space between animality and humanity, becoming-child but never becoming-adult. Perhaps the closest approximation to the eternal child, the pet thus highlights the extent to which constructions of childhood continue to be fossilized in Romantic notions of innocence and purity that must ostensibly be abandoned in children’s process of becoming adults. As such, the figure of the pet brings into sharp relief the performative dimensions of the distinct tempos and tonalities associated with human childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, or what I call *aetotemporality*. Building on Maria Nikolajeva’s term ‘*aetonormativity* (Lat. *aeto-*, pertaining to age)’, a shorthand for the ‘adult normativity that governs the way children’s literature has been patterned’,^x I utilize the term ‘aetotemporality’ to refer to the Euroamerican patterning of individual human development along a path of progression from lack to agency. Hence aetotemporality is closely affiliated with Elizabeth Freeman’s concept of ‘chrononormativity’, which denotes ‘interlocking temporal schemes necessary for genealogies of descent’ and is characterized by ‘[m]anipulations of time [to] convert historically specific regimes of asymmetrical power into seemingly ordinary bodily tempos and routines’.^{xi} Via the operations of aetotemporality, the child is constituted as a not-yet subject in an asymmetrical power relation with the adult that is decreed to be ‘natural’.

This separation of childhood and adulthood into distinct spheres characterized by binary relations – with the former designated fundamentally as a space for *becoming* and the latter as a state of *being* – is experienced as natural but enforced via a complex disciplinary apparatus. As such, aetotemporality is inherently performative and serves as the script for normative, so-called age-appropriate comportment and development. Carmen Dell’Aversano’s description of humanormativity is instructive here, as the ways in which speciesism is regulated and enforced have much in common with the operations of aetotemporality. Humanormativity is constitutive of the human/animal gap, ‘maintain[ing] that *all* members of one species (*homo sapiens*) have more in common with one another than any of them can have with any member of any other species’.^{xii} Aetotemporality similarly creates a gulf between ‘the child’ and ‘the adult’ and suggests that all children, by virtue of being trapped in childhood, have more in common with one another than any of them do with any adult. Specificities of individual children are subsumed, within aetotemporal conditions, under the purportedly ‘universal’ features that differentiate all children from all adults. Dell’Aversano explains that the speciesism undergirding humanormativity derives from ‘the discursive and institutional conditions under which some biological differences become social and political differences which are used to establish

boundaries’;^{xiii} the adultism at the heart of aetotemporal normativity similarly relies on ascertaining as foundational some differences between humans – i.e., the (specious) differences between the ostensibly unmarked, universal child and its adult counterpart – while eliding multifarious other ways in which people can be (and are, under other discursive conditions) distinguished from or aligned with one another. Premised on what Robin Bernstein has called ‘racial innocence’, this figuration of the universal child of aetotemporality was born out of nineteenth-century Euroamerican conceptions of childlike innocence, which ‘manifested through the performed transcendence of social categories of class, gender, and [...] race’.^{xiv} This performance of ‘holy obliviousness’ and colour blindness effectively linked innocence with ‘unmarked’ whiteness, making it possible for the non-white child to be ‘defined out of childhood’.^{xv}

Much like the human relies on animal figures in order to confirm its own humanity, the adult relies on child figures in order to assert its self-definition as an adult, and hence the animal and the child ‘furnish the coordinates’ for “‘proper” (adult) humanity’ at the same time that this process invisibilizes them as agential subjects.^{xvi} Importantly, however, whereas the animal is defined by its inability to ever be human, the child is expected to eventually become an adult – though this becoming can only be fully realized at the moment when the child ceases to be a child – which characterizes the contradictions inherent to aetotemporality: figured as the adult’s opposite and tasked with performing this alterity, the child is nonetheless also always envisioned as a future adult, and normative adulthood is posited as the developmental achievement it must attain. The supposedly linear temporal progression from childhood to adulthood has been utilized not only to trace individual development but also to figure the evolution of the human species: in nineteenth-century scientific discourse, ‘the child was seen as a bodily theater where human history could be observed to unfold in the compressed timespan of individual development’, whereby non-Western racialized and ‘primitive’ populations came to be ‘placed in the time of childhood’.^{xvii} While the child, standing in for the species, thus turned into a representation of humanity’s past, adulthood was made into an achievement of normative development that was unattainable not only for non-Western peoples but also for ‘[t]he female, the racialized, the insane, the disabled, and the poor [who] were left behind, in childhood’.^{xviii} The non-white child is thereby subjected to the discursive violence of a paradoxical double exclusion: exiled from the ‘unmarked’ innocence of childhood, it is also and at the same time barred from the possible future enfranchisement of adulthood. Neither an innocent child nor a not-yet adult, the racialized child is effectively removed from the realm of the human via this new aetotemporal order. Even the white male child-body was no guarantee for the specific normative modes of growing up that attainment of adulthood necessitated, since the potentiality that undergirds development always contains the possibility of failing to grow along the desired pathways. In order to prevent such potential failure, childhood has been turned into a tightly controlled space where the institutions of childhood labour to guide the child into adulthood, which is here understood less as a stage of

the human life cycle than as an achievement resulting from socially sanctioned development of subjecthood.

Since the anthropological machine functions via animality's simultaneous inclusion in and exclusion from humanity – constituting what Agamben calls 'bare life' – the child, as 'nascent human, has come to represent the anthropomorphous animality adult humanity leaves in its wake, and which must be worked upon in order to create a better humanity'.^{.xix} Linked to the formation of nation-states in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the development of the modern conception of childhood in the West went hand-in-hand with the rise of capitalism, industrialization and international competition, effectively turning the child into a resource that, as the emblem of the future citizenry, required protection and nurture. Excluded from the workforce and subjected to compulsory education, children were increasingly removed from the public sphere and relegated to a space of learning designed to foster hegemonically desired (straight and vertical) growth. 'Training the nation's youth' thus became 'a matter of evolutionary progress, from child to adult, savage to civilized, animal to man'.^{.xx} Imagined 'as a separate "species"' distinct from the adult, the child was seen to occupy a developmental life-stage preparing for adulthood. which 'suggests an understanding of aging as an evolutionary transformation of form, substance, and purpose'.^{.xxi} Epitomizing the survival of both the nation and the species, the child thus came to signify a hope and promise that is always on the horizon. Such understandings of the child have only proliferated in the twentieth century, which was 'both the century of biopolitical governance and the century of the child'.^{.xxii} In recent decades, and amidst increasing anxieties over the prospect of ecological, epidemic or nuclear apocalypse, representations and theorizations of the link between the child and the future have been particularly prolific. As hope for species survival is placed on the child, it is through this figure 'that the present may be safely reproduced as the future, forming a closed loop via generation'.^{.xxiii} This explicit yoking together of the child and human futurity, whereby the child's growth into adulthood once again represents far more than individual development, delimits the immeasurable value of the child that ostensibly warrants protection at any cost.

Lee Edelman voices a forceful critique of this idea of the child as 'the telos of the social order'.^{.xxiv} Coining the term 'reproductive futurism' to denote the manufacture of perpetual sameness via generational succession, Edelman delineates a binary between the Child, as the icon of futurity, and queerness, here designated as 'the side of those *not* "fighting for the children"'.^{.xxv} Dell'Aversano posits that the animal can be located on the queer side of this binary because '[u]nlike the parent-child bond, which is defined by teleology, the human-animal bond is not teleological: it does not sagely postpone gratification, it does not project anything into, or onto, the future'.^{.xxvi} Given that Dell'Aversano thinks, within this context, of animals in intimate relationships with humans, her argument seems particularly applicable to pets, and we can hence consider how her discussion delimits the pet and the child as inherently antithetical figures: if there exists an 'opposition between animal and child, as the embodiments respectively of Right

Now and the Other and of Future and the Self’, creating ‘the identity of the animal as the anti-Child’, then the pet is indeed the ‘anti-Child’ par excellence. ^{xxvii} Because it jams the teleological wheels of reproductive futurism, the pet speaks to a mode of queerness that rejects facile reproduction of the self-same, troubles any straightforward relations to the future and, as Haraway may put it, ‘unravel[s] the ties of both genealogy and kin, and kin and species’. ^{xxviii}

This opposition between the child and queerness is, however, based on a problematic framing of the child – reminiscent of nineteenth-century figurations – as implicitly white, bourgeois and (hetero)normative: as José Esteban Muñoz has convincingly shown, Edelman’s polemic eschews ‘the relational relevance of race or class’, fails to account for ‘[r]acialized kids, queer kids, [who] are not the sovereign princes of futurity’, and ultimately presents a theory of queer temporality that reinscribes a position of white privilege freed from the need to imagine a futurity ‘where queer youths of color actually get to grow up’. ^{xxix} Far from speaking to the material realities of children, Edelman’s critique relies on the effigy of the iconic Child which enshrines childhood as a privileged space that only very few – if any – non-figural children inhabit. In addition, aetotemporal normativity cannot be guaranteed by any child, since the potentiality to grow up into a socially sanctioned mode of adulthood is necessarily wed to the potentiality-not-to, so that there always lurks the danger – or hope, depending on one’s vantage point – that the future promised by the child could be otherwise. In other words, inherent to both the figure of the child and the idea of the future is the fact ‘that radical change is not only possible but also continuously operating within the logic of self-similarity and as the condition of reproducibility’. ^{xxx} Because the child under aetotemporal conditions is by definition a not-yet proper or fully formed human in the process of transformation – a process whose outcome is never assured – its becomings can take surprising, even queer forms quite distinct from becoming-adult. As such, not only the pet but the child, too, can undo the links between temporality and reproduction.

II. Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Child

To illustrate how the child may engage in nonnormative transformations that trouble the mechanisms of reproductive futurism and the aetotemporal order, I turn to Kathryn Bond Stockton’s notion of the ‘interval of animal’ and to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s concept of ‘becoming-animal’. These related theorizations put the child in touch with the animal, appear to draw on the child’s liminality as animalized human and seem to confirm the child’s supposed special intimacy with ‘nature’ and its creatures. Stockton’s discussion of childhood takes issue with the very idea of ‘growing up’, since it delineates the child’s various transformations only ‘as vertical movement upward [...] toward full stature’ and, moreover, implies that all growth comes to an end once this full stature is reached. ^{xxxi} This notion of vertical, upward growth that

characterizes the child's prescribed path toward adulthood speaks to modern Western philosophy's conception of the (adult) self as straight, vertical and stable, which Adriana Cavarero critiques as an individualistic, masculine model of subjectivity that fails to render the ways in which the I is inclined toward others.^{.xxxii} 'Inclination bends and dispossesses the I',^{.xxxiii} and the inclined self is hence neither stable nor straight, but queer (in the sense of the term's German root *quer*, meaning oblique). Such geometrical queerness is inherent to Stockton's conception of 'growing sideways', which captures the lateral growths undertaken by children and adults alike but is particularly applicable to the child – caught as it is in the web of institutions intent on shaping its growth in socially desired ways – as a mode of transformation that 'the child in part controls for herself, in ways confounding her parents and her future'.^{.xxxiv} This sideways growth can be propelled by an 'interval of animal' for which a specific pet, the dog, serves as the primary figure: the pervasiveness of dogs in the media directed at children indicates the extent to which the dog functions as a 'living, growing metaphor for the child itself', compelling the child to identify with and self-project onto this pet.^{.xxxv} In these intimate encounters between child and pet, the dog – whose growth, within this context, is necessarily lateral because it cannot be measured in human generations – becomes both the vehicle and figure for the child's sideways growth that occurs outside the realm of teleological futurity.^{.xxxvi}

The child's intimacy with the dog in lateral growth speaks to what Deleuze and Guattari call the 'dog-child'.^{.xxxvii} Children, they note, 'continually undergo becomings of this kind': even as they are relentlessly carried toward adulthood, it appears as though 'there were room in the child for other becomings', and for becomings-animal in particular.^{.xxxviii} But unlike Stockton, who sees in the dog the child's companion in growing sideways, Deleuze and Guattari find that those 'individuated animals, family pets, sentimental, Oedipal animals [...] "my" cat, "my" dog' invite nothing but narcissistic regression and are, therefore, unsuitable partners for becoming-animal.^{.xxxix} Although Deleuze and Guattari do not entirely exclude the dog or the cat from productive becomings with humans, they stipulate that becoming-animal alliances can only be formed with dogs or cats if these animals have not been integrated into the family, do not function as Oedipal animals and, therefore, remain outside the realm of pethood. The pet, for Deleuze and Guattari, is a fundamentally subjugated animal that serves for the human as a non-threatening, 'homely' object of affection. Indeed, the close connection between the pet and the home is undeniable: as the German word for pet, *Haustier*, makes explicit, the pet is quite literally a 'home-animal' as the only animal that is invited to share the human's most intimate living space. My own theorization of the pet as becoming-child sustains the pet's association with the home but adds the pertinent caveat that the pet can never be-child: a liminal figure that is not-quite-animal (since it is an anthropomorphized, domesticated companion of humans) but also not-quite-child (since it is nonhuman), the pet ultimately deconstructs binaries of animal/human and inside/outside. Straddling the *heimlich/unheimlich* divide, the pet is an uncanny liminal figure that lives in the home without properly belonging to it.

Haraway has condemned Deleuze and Guattari's condescension toward pets, which she regards as a 'scorn for the homely' that establishes a speciesist binary between the domestic and the wild.^{.xi} This poignant critique leads me to question whether Deleuze and Guattari's disdain for the domestic is not also bound up with a scorn for the child. If it is in fact true that what separates the pet from all other animals is that it is individualized and kinned like a family member – in other words, if what characterizes the pet is its *becoming-child* – then does the pet's inability to draw the human into tantalizing becomings not render the child, too, a mere sentimental and familial figure of regression? And if it indeed does, what are the implications for Deleuze and Guattari's conceptions of a related mode of minoritarian becoming, a transformation termed 'becoming-child'? What ultimately makes the child an appealing figure for becomings, but not the pet? It appears that whereas Deleuze and Guattari's theorization has already removed the child from the aetotemporal traps of childhood and renders it a mere representative of youth, the pet still needs to be freed from pethood in order to be an animal figure for becomings.

In eliding the material realities of childhood, Deleuze and Guattari's 'becoming-child' differs in its connotations and implications from my understanding of the pet's becoming-child through which the pet consistently approaches and approximates the child, becoming-child but never actually being-child. In my notion of the pet's becoming-child, this child is shaped by specific contemporary Euroamerican institutions and characterized by its status as the adult's other; it is captured by the aetotemporal condition of innocence and ignorance; and it is caught within the disciplinary technologies of childhood. The pet is the only animal, I posit, that enters into this kind of becoming-child; in fact, it is this very becoming-child that distinguishes the pet from other animals. For Deleuze and Guattari, on the other hand, becoming-child is a specifically human mode of transformation wherein 'the child is the becoming-young of every age'.^{.xli} This becoming-child thus operates via an evacuation of the child that leaves it as nothing more than a form of becoming, so that effectively, 'there is no difference between children and adults, only differences of becoming young or not at every age'.^{.xlii} By utilizing 'the figure of the child as a site of possibility from which the (adult) subject gains the capacity for transformative change', Deleuze and Guattari's formulation ultimately eschews the specific materiality and embodiment of the child, fails to render child/adult differences, and asserts adult privilege.^{.xliii}

Conceptualizations of the child that rely on such effigies, which make use of the child figure in order to advance conceptions of adult subjecthood, continue to be surprisingly ubiquitous and speak to the role children still play in delineating (while remaining excluded from) the properly human.^{.xliv} Even Agamben's theorization of the child, in his discussion of child-play, proceeds by 'plac[ing] the child within a conceptual zone of exclusion' and relegating it 'to the social imaginary, or a fantasy space', as Joanne Faulkner has shown.^{.xlv} The child at play, 'pluck[ing] objects from their historico-material context' and transforming their meanings by turning them into toys, here serves once more as a figure of potentiality: the hope for politics and liberation, Agamben posits, rests on humanity's taking inspiration from the child in order to play with the

law and free it from its conventional use and value.^{.xlv} Put differently, what sets children apart from (adult) citizens is their ability to subvert ‘the metaphysics of everyday life’ through play, and the citizens’ hope for transformation and freedom lies in imitating this subversive playfulness.^{.xlvii} As such, Agamben situates the child outside the realm of proper citizenship, and his figuration hence ‘conforms to a disturbing tendency to signify in the child a separation from the remainder of the community’.^{.xlviii}

Agamben’s concept of infancy, which once more utilizes the young child as a figure of potentiality, is also not immune to this form of critique. Agamben’s delineation of infancy as the human’s originary situation of existing in language but without speech relies on establishing a flawed opposition between animal language and human discourse that ostensibly strengthens rather than jams the anthropological machine. Suggesting, despite scientific evidence to the contrary, that animals ‘are always and totally language’ and hence ‘do not enter’ it, he posits that the human, on the other hand, lacks proper language, or speech, in infancy.^{.xlix} Agamben theorizes that the infant’s muteness is not excluded from but rather sustained within humanity’s relation to each discursive utterance, so that infancy, in this sense, ‘describes an experience of language beyond the logic of inclusive exclusion, an experience of [pure] potentiality’.^{.i} Yet even though the infant has to ‘receive [human language] from outside himself’,^{.li} Agamben removes the child from the condition of vulnerability and exposure that characterizes attachments to others because his conception understands the infant as an auto-relational and hence independent figure, as Sarah Hansen has demonstrated.^{.lii} Here, too, the child is effectively excluded from the embodied relations sustaining the rest of the community, and it is situated outside the situation of dependence so characteristic of the condition of childhood, and of infancy especially.

As Edelman’s, Deleuze and Guattari’s, and Agamben’s figurations indicate, even contemporary theorizations of the child tend to participate less in challenging the fraught biopolitical foundations of current modes of aetotemporality than in affirming them. In order to productively thwart both aetotemporal normativity and the anthropological machine, it is imperative to move beyond such essentializing, exclusionary figurations and engage instead with the specificities of singularities. Ascertaining the need for ‘an account of subjects as subjectivities that are precisely singular, and so also never entirely knowable’, Claudia Castañeda argues that such theorizing means ‘to inhabit a different mode of knowing, necessarily partial and situated’.^{.liii} An account of not-fully-knowable singularities must proceed without eliding the foundational asymmetries that characterize our relations with child and pet others, and it needs to respond to vulnerability, dependence and silence with *philia* and hospitality.

III. Petophilic Hospitality

Living with children and pets brings alterity into intimate presence and requires a hospitality that ethically engages with disparities in authority, power and agency. Such disparities in fact present an unavoidable premise for encounters with alterity because ‘the capacity to respond, and so to be responsible, should not be expected to take on symmetrical shapes and textures for all the parties’ and ‘cannot emerge within relationships of self-similarity’.^{liv} Both the child, whom Derrida calls ‘the one who needs to be welcomed, fed, sheltered, the one who is in principle, disarmed, infinitely vulnerable and needy, the absolute guest or arrival’,^{lv} and the pet as uncanny *Haustier* present us with liminal cases of hospitality precisely because of their figurations as not-quite-human others. Derrida’s neologism *l’animot* is instructive here for thinking an ethics of hospitality with children and pets: a French term that is grammatically singular but sounds like the plural *animaux* (‘animals’), it draws attention to the ‘heterogeneous multiplicity’ that is subsumed under and ultimately erased in the single figure of ‘The Animal’^{lvi} – much like figurations of the pet and the child eschew the multiplicities hidden under those two umbrellas. Because Derrida posits ‘the proto-ethical relations between human beings and animals in terms of a disruptive, face-to-face encounter between singular beings’, the generality of ‘the animal’ as a generic category ‘betray[s] the singularity of the ethical relation’.^{lvii} Instead of relying on a categorical imperative for pet-human and child-adult relations, an ethics of living-with-alterity must, therefore, grapple with the complexities, paradoxes and specificities of encounters with singularities.

Although Agamben’s discussion of ‘whatever singularities’, which constitute the basis of the ‘coming community’, explicitly references neither pets nor children, it presents a productive avenue for exploring the possibility of hospitable, caring encounters with these others that are non-essentialist and non-reductive. The ‘whatever’ in Agamben’s formulation (*quodlibet* in Latin) delineates not indifference but singularity: ‘not “being, it does not matter which,” but rather “being such that it always matters”’.^{lviii} Freeing being from the false binary of ‘the ineffability of the individual and the intelligibility of the universal’, whatever singularity is coterminous with ‘the Lovable’:^{lix}

Love is never directed toward this or that property of the loved one (being blond, being small, being tender, being lame), but neither does it neglect the properties in favor of an insipid generality (universal love): The lover wants the loved one *with all of its predicates*, its being such as it is.^{lx}

Following Agamben, the whatever singularity of a pet or a child becomes pronounced in relations of proximity and intimacy, wherein the pet or child is encountered through love, or

what I call ‘petophilic hospitality’. *Philia* within this context is a more precise term than ‘love’, since it better captures the non-sexual, non-romantic affection in our relations with pets and children. Moreover, this term suggests the ethical inclination central to hospitality because *philia* toward another creature entails ‘wishing for him what you believe to be good things, not for your own sake but for his, and being *inclined*, so far as you can, to bring these things about’.^{.lxi} As such, *philia* is bound up with a subject’s inclination toward the other, which ‘knocks the I from its internal center of gravity and, by making it lean to the outside, [...] undermines its stability’.^{.lxii} The relationality suggested by *philia* is thus inherently queer, and petophilic hospitality inclines the hosts toward lovable others in queering ways that render these devoted hosts vulnerable, exposed and precarious.

The adjective *petophilic* makes explicit the connection I wish to establish between *philia* and the pet (a term whose possible denotations notably include ‘a child that enjoys favorable treatment’, as in the phrase ‘teacher’s pet’). Since the noun, adjectival and verb forms of ‘pet’ are identical, this neologism can further denote devotion (for instance to a ‘pet project’) as well as the act of affectionate treatment (as in ‘pet the dog’). Petophilic hospitality, then, connotes an ethical relation with vulnerable singularities that is intimate, attentive and affectionate. The term’s evocation of its close cousin ‘pedophilic’ may not be altogether unfortunate: it allows the child hidden in ‘pet’ to be heard more clearly, and although there is no sexual component to petophilic hospitality, the sinister meaning of ‘pedophilic’ that my phrase nonetheless evokes may be read as excavating the boundary-crossing transgression inherent to petophilic hospitality’s queer relationality. Queer, in this context, speaks to ‘animate transgressions, violating proper intimacies (including between humans and nonhuman things)’:^{.lxiii} whereas intimacy with a pet violates species boundaries because it transgresses the limits of normative, intraspecies love and affection, a relationship of petophilic hospitality with a child is non-teleological and hence violates aetotemporal normativity, disrupting the chain of succession that pulls humankind relentlessly out of the present into the future.

The hospitable relationality I envision necessitates that encounters with a child not be framed in the teleological terms of reproductive futurism, since such teleology positions the child as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Sophie Lewis’ notion of ‘queer polymaternalism’^{.lxiv} points toward one possible horizon of petophilic hospitality vis-à-vis the child, foregrounding non-teleological relationality and undermining conceptions of the child as the figure of self-same reproduction. Concerned with ‘regeneration, not self-replication’, the reproductive justice Lewis proposes builds on the idea that children do not “‘belong” exclusively to you – or indeed to anyone’.^{.lxv} Within such a ‘repro-utopian’ framework – which, moreover, includes ‘multispecies’ surrogacy, parenting and care – the child is not a figure of continuity of the self.^{.lxvi} In fact, it could even be said that the child here is ‘becoming-pet’ in the sense that, like the pet, it troubles the naturalized ties between family, kinship and succession. The emphasis in queer polymaternalism is hence on parenting, not reproduction: in Haraway’s words, ‘[p]arenting is

about caring for generations, one's own or not; reproducing is about making more of oneself to populate the future, quite a different matter'.^{lxvii} Importantly, then, the child in this repro-utopia does not incur any debt, as it is not tasked with carrying the family line into the future, and this lack of debt is central to an ethics of petophilic hospitality.

Though less obviously, perhaps, than the child-adult relationship under the aetotemporal conditions of repro-futurity, the normative pet-human relationship, too, is characterized by debt and repayment. In Euroamerican households, at least, pets are expected to furnish the human with loyal companionship in exchange for food and shelter; 'If there is no return, the animal is then vermin, a pest, and a parasite', not a pet.^{lxviii} In Creole culture, however, the foundation of human-animal bonds is not economical but commensal, as Bénédicte Boisseron has shown.^{lxix} Commensalism, she explains, 'is an organic philosophy built on the act of sharing without being owed and taking without being indebted', and commensal human-animal relationships – such as those with village dogs or with chameleons who freely enter and leave houses – do not ask that the animal repay the human for its subsistence with work or affection.^{lxx} The commensal relationship between humans and liminal animals such as village dogs, who are neither feral nor fully domesticated, can suggest a debt-free model for an ethics of petophilic hospitality vis-à-vis pets. Such a commensal petophilic hospitality would require a radical rethinking of human-pet relations in ways that take seriously the pet's agency without, however, negating its vulnerability and dependence. It would suggest encountering and caring for the pet as a lovable creature without demanding love in return, fostering respect for the possibility of its silence and non-response. It would nurture a queer, asymmetrical inclination toward this pet other in which the self's dispossession and precarious openness become their own ends.

Commensalism presents a radical departure from the *quid pro quo* that characterizes multifarious hierarchical relations, including those of parents and children under aetotemporal conditions. 'Gratitude, debt, and the pressure to return the gesture are the premises of colonization, husbandry, and domestication', but commensalism, in stark opposition to such exploitative bonds, instead fosters 'a human-to-animal and human-to-human relationship that carries an anticolonial, antihegemonic, and anti-anthropocentric resonance'.^{lxxi} Petophilic hospitality adds to commensal encounters a dimension that is explicitly devoted and affectionate, that grows from loving inclinations to intimate others, and that speaks specifically to a relationality with vulnerable creatures in our immediate proximity. As such, petophilic hospitality foregrounds singularities and must remain flexible to the specificities of each individual encounter with those who are near, be they children, pets or other precarious creatures.

Given that the unflagging operations of the anthropological machine and the aetotemporal order still characterize our normative inter- and intraspecies relations, the pet and the child continue to be silenced others. A central question for petophilic hospitality might then be, not whether the pet and the child can speak, but how to listen to their silence. Such intimate listening requires

proximity to singularities, engaging with the dog, the cat, the child that is in front or next to me, and not with a figural abstraction. After all, and while we may indeed never know what it is like to be a bat or a tick, we share our *Umwelt* with pets and children in partial but nonetheless meaningful ways that allow us to respond to, and be responsible for, these creatures that live with us. At the same time, the ecological crisis we are facing necessitates that we abandon binary, hierarchical definitions of the human. It demands from us ‘gestures of solidarity with the other at the limit [which] require the embrace of a vulnerability, silence, and uncertainty previously shunned by Western humanity most concerned with knowing its place at the apex of an order of life’.^{lxxii} We must jam the anthropological machine so that the pet and the child – and too many others at the limit – no longer serve as props for anthropogenesis. And we must envision and enact new, non-anthropocentric, risky models of living-with-alterity so that we may move toward a hospitable horizon.

Notes

- i. Agamben, *The Open*, 29; 79.
- ii. *Ibid.*, 16.
- iii. Derrida, *The Animal I Am*, 29.
- iv. Faulkner, ‘Negotiating Vulnerability through “Animal”’, 76.
- v. Agamben, *The Open*, 92.
- vi. Faulkner, ‘Negotiating Vulnerability through “Animal”’, 83.
- vii. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 232.
- viii. Fudge, *Pets*, 49.
- ix. Castañeda, *Figurations*, 43.
- x. Nikolajeva, *Power, Voice and Subjectivity*, 8.
- xi. Freeman, *Time Binds*, xxii; 3.
- xii. Dell’Aversano, ‘The Love Whose Name’, 76 (emphasis in original).
- xiii. *Ibid.*, 88.
- xiv. Bernstein, *Racial Innocence*, 6.
- xv. *Ibid.*, 8; 20.
- xvi. Faulkner, ‘Negotiating Vulnerability through “Animal”’, 75.
- xvii. Castañeda, *Figurations*, 13.
- xviii. *Ibid.*, 41.
- xix. Faulkner, ‘Negotiating Vulnerability through “Animal”’, 74.
- xx. Glick, *Infrahumanisms*, 27.
- xxi. *Ibid.*, 48; 54.
- xxii. Sheldon, *The Child to Come*, 117.
- xxiii. *Ibid.*, 29.

- xxiv. Edelman, *No Future*, 11.
- xxv. *Ibid.*, 3 (emphasis in original).
- xxvi. Dell'Aversano, 'The Love Whose Name', 103.
- xxvii. *Ibid.*, 104-105.
- xxviii. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 102.
- xxix. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 94-96.
- xxx. Sheldon, *The Child to Come*, 29.
- xxxi. Stockton, *The Queer Child*, 4.
- xxxii. Cavarero, *Inclinations*, 10-11.
- xxxiii. *Ibid.*, 7.
- xxxiv. Stockton, *The Queer Child*, 11; 90.
- xxxv. *Ibid.*, 94; 89-90.
- xxxvi. *Ibid.*, 53.
- xxxvii. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 273.
- xxxviii. *Ibid.*, 259; 273.
- xxxix. *Ibid.*, 240.
- xl. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 29; 28.
- xli. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 277.
- xl. Castañeda, *Figurations*, 147.
- xl. *Ibid.*, 148-149.
- xl. See Castañeda, *Figurations*, 142-171.
- xl. Faulkner, 'Innocence, Evil, Human Frailty', 210.
- xlvi. *Ibid.*
- xlvi. *Ibid.*
- xlvi. *Ibid.*
- xl. Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 52.
- i. Hansen, 'Infancy, Animality and Limits', 168.
- ii. Agamben, *Infancy and History*, 57
- iii. Hansen, 'Infancy, Animality and Limits', 175.
- liii. Castañeda, *Figurations*, 170.
- liv. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 71.
- lv. qtd. in Still, *Derrida and Hospitality*, 131.
- lvi. Derrida, *The Animal I Am*, 31.
- lvii. Calarco, *Zoographies*, 142.
- lviii. Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 1.
- lix. *Ibid.*, 1, 2.
- lx. *Ibid.*, 2 (emphasis in original).
- lxi. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 66 (my emphasis).
- lxii. Cavarero, *Inclinations*, 6.
- lxiii. Chen, *Animacies*, 11.
- lxiv. Lewis, *Full Surrogacy Now*, 168.
- lxv. *Ibid.*, 167; 158.
- lxvi. *Ibid.*, 139; 158.
- lxvii. Haraway, 'Speculative Fabulations', 117.
- lxviii. Boisseron, *Afro-Dog*, 93.
- lxix. *Ibid.*, 94.

lxx. Ibid., 92; 95.

lxxi. Ibid., 100; 107.

lxxii. Faulkner, 'Negotiating Vulnerability through "Animal"', 83.

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