Don't Scare the Wolves: Toward response-able human-nonhuman coexistence

by

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Candidate's Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of the author's knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

Pele Cannon Date: 15 Sept 2023

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Abstract

Human-nonhuman relationships and coexistence are defining features of our everyday lives, though their many layers and scales – from the microbiome to the ecosystem and the planet - are not necessarily a daily conscious consideration. We exist, and are brought into being, through our relationships with other beings – many human, most nonhuman – and the narratives and hegemonies of human ideas and decision-making affect all of us. These myriad, always-ongoing relationships form the backdrop for the exploration presented in this thesis.

The foreground of this thesis is an empirical case-study of a very localised set of relationships: those at an educational wolf sanctuary and nature centre deep in the mountains of Colorado, USA. The stories gathered through qualitative interviews with visitors and volunteers at this sanctuary, Mission: Wolf, as well as the participant observations I documented while living and working there, provide a rich data-set which I then set out to contextualise against broader ideas and theories of nonhuman life, moral responsibility, and coexistence.

This study highlights the importance of how we understand ourselves, how we understand nonhuman life, how we use stories to explain our relationships with each other, and what stories we tell those stories with. Stories of relationship are material and philosophical, as well as moral. Learning why and how to not scare the wolves is both a practical exercise, and a moral one, with broader implications than merely informing the human-canine interactions and coexistence in my case-study setting. What it means and why it matters that we coexist is a question of the always ongoing negotiation inherent to living and dying well in a multispecies world.

With this thesis I offer a construction of coexistence, and a discussion of what might be required to become more skilful at coexisting with each other, and other nonhuman beings. As a means of working towards this skilfulness in human-nonhuman moral relationships, I draw together ideas from across a wide array of literature. Grounding this thesis in historical debates over morality in human-nonhuman relationships contextualises my construction of a concept of coexistence. If coexistence is understood as something more than tolerance, something more like stewardship, implying care, then what does that conception offer as a story about what or who requires or gives care, how those requirements or obligations arise and are understood or responded to, and with what consequences for both human and nonhuman lives? This thesis is thus a story about the ways we interact with and intervene in each other's lives, how we relate, and the consequences for all those lives of human ideas and actions regarding the current and imagined future arrangements of human and nonhuman beings that are desired. We are always already coexisting, and we can think categorically and/or relationally about that coexistence. In a world and system of relationships we have made meaningful, this thesis examines what it means to 'coexist'.

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Away with the Wolves - a Prologue

Figure 1: Farah, rescued gray wolf living at Mission: Wolf. ©PCannon, 2016

I. Dr Wolf…

I lived and worked at a wolf sanctuary in Colorado for two years. Initially, I was simply a traveller and volunteer looking for adventure, later I was there as a curious researcher. This PhD thesis relays the doctoral journey prompted by that place and that experience.

When I tell people that I did this volunteer work, they usually react with fascination, awe, envy, amazement and sometimes fear. Occasionally, with derision or concern, reflective perhaps of their own experiences of less reputable commercial wildlife 'sanctuaries'. But they always react with interest.

Invariably, people want me to explain how I ended up there, how the place works, whether I got to interact with the wolves much, what they were like.

It is rarely a short conversation, and it often leads into lengthy discussions about nature, ecology, conservation, human fallibility, psychology, land-use, and lethal control - that is, the ways we kill things to 'control' them. These long discussions eventuate, obviously, because these are the things I am interested in, so I engage with enthusiasm. But it must also have to do with how strange, amazing, and foreign wolves seem to most people. How other; how wonder-full. They are dogs, in a way, those familiar household companions: but they are also not dogs. People are always curious about this point in particular, citing their 'wildness' as the characteristic that

most distinguished them from dogs. How does it manifest? Are these ones domesticated? People are also usually struck by the inanity of attempting to keep something 'wild' in your backyard as a pet, which was the reason most of the animals that lived at this wolf sanctuary were there.

This thesis is the outcome of physical, emotional, philosophical, and theoretical explorations inspired by my experiences of living and working alongside the wolves and people at this sanctuary; experiences further interpreted and negotiated through the many conversations I have had over the last decade about it as a place of learning, refuge, and human-nonhuman coexistence. Between 2012-2016, I lived at the sanctuary for a year and a half altogether; and I thought there was something interesting enough going on there that it was worth spending a further four years studying for a PhD. In 2018, I spent another three months living there, to collect the qualitative survey and interview data that are presented in this thesis. It is important to note at this point that the data collected in this PhD project and presented here will not be used to explain or 'answer' any specific hypothesis or query, rather they were taken as inspirational 'stepping off points' for the further theoretical and philosophical exploration detailed in these pages. The data will thus be used to complement and exemplify or illustrate the main discussion that is the heart of my research.

Inspired by the relationships I built with the other human and nonhuman beings living at the sanctuary in Colorado, the main discussion in this thesis revolves around relationships and relationality: that is, how do we think about, understand and communicate with each other, and can we get better at that? The relationships I witnessed being continuously made and remade between the other humans and nonhumans that called the sanctuary home, and those relationships that I made and experienced myself, have given me a wealth of material through which to think and consider human-nonhuman relationships, including our moral entanglements and responsibilities.

II. An origin story

The wolf sanctuary that prompted and inspired this journey is nestled in the foothills of Greenhorn Mountain, in an area known as the Wet Mountains, just east of the Rocky Mountains, in the state of Colorado in the United States of America (USA). Greenhorn Mountain was named after the Comanche chief known by the Spanish invaders as Cuerno Verde, and the Wet Mountain Valley region was traditionally Ute country (Encyclopedia Staff, 2023). This is an ironic location for a wolf sanctuary, because it was supposedly the territory of one of the last known wild wolves in Colorado (KW, pers comm April 19, 2018). Or at least that's how the story goes… She was known as the 'Greenhorn wolf', and I heard many versions of her story in my time at the sanctuary. Most recounted that it had taken the hunter six months to kill this last wolf, in 1942. The story of her death became a fable in local regions, telling of the taming of the wild, at a time when 'control' was the goal. For 70 years since, wolves have not lived in the wild in Colorado.

In the mid-1980s, a young man of 27 years bought the most remote block he could afford, to build a sanctuary. Wolves returned to Greenhorn Mountain: they were not free to roam, but they were there, nonetheless. Was 'wildness' seeping back in? That man, Kent Weber, bought the block initially to provide a refuge for the dozen wolves and wolf-dogs he had rescued already, taken in mainly from private owners and backyards when the animals demonstrated they were too 'wolf-like' to get along in such domestic situations. His intention at that time was not to build an education centre dealing with hundreds of visitors a day, nor a place that would end up accommodating upwards of a dozen long-term volunteers at a time. He merely wanted to provide a home for life for some animals he had taken responsibility for (KW, pers comm April 19, 2018).

Origins in captivity were the common denominator amongst the resident animals of the Mission: Wolf sanctuary, but their differences from that baseline were several. Some were the result of breeding - intentional or accidental - in other zoos or sanctuaries. Some had originally been acquired as pets and then surrendered. Some, of lesser-known origin, were rescued from animal shelters, on the cusp of euthanasia. Some had known adequate if not happy homes; others had known only neglect or abuse.

Named Mission: Wolf, in appreciation of the almost impossible mission of caring for challenging animals in a challenging location, the sanctuary started only as a place for these animals to hide. It soon became a place of refuge and retreat for all, both human and nonhuman. As people arrived first to meet the wolves and then to help out in their care, the sanctuary became home to as diverse a crew of humans as it was to nonhumans. And the humans and nonhumans living there over the years co-created the dynamic of the place as a 'refuge'.

This dynamic of coexistence and co-creation is a large part of what inspired my doctoral journey. The tensions, relationships, connections, ideas, and consequence I explore and theorise here emerged out of the confrontations, experiences, and challenges of living at Mission: Wolf.

III. Stories of relationship

Throughout the time I spent at Mission: Wolf, I was confronted by the connections between our stories and ideas of nonhuman life and the material consequences on their/our lives. This wolf sanctuary existed because of past human actions, in attempting to possess, control and own wolves, and because of the ability of these nonhumans to resist the imposition of human-oriented meaning, behavioural expectations, relationships, and existence. These actions and abilities are themselves a story about the relationships between human and nonhuman lives. How we understand and give meaning to our relationships with nonhuman other beings is a powerful story. My thesis, this story, asks us to consider what follows from this: what are the moral implications and ethical obligations emergent from our ongoing encounters with nonhuman others?

In one framing, this thesis is a story about wolves: wolves that are not in the wild, not 'free'. Their lives are the way they are as a direct consequence of human ideas and decisions: of human

desires to own, control, or 'be close to'; and of human compulsions to see and know and touch. This situation makes these wolves more like their wild-living cousins than might at first be obvious. Wolf populations are among the most heavily monitored of any wild animal in America: radio-collared wolves form a significant component of the wild wolf population, and are an essential component of research, monitoring, and management programs (US Fish & Wildlife Service, 2022a). What does it mean for an animal to be 'wild' in such circumstances of surveillance? Wolves in the wild are as much affected by decisions made by humans as are wolves in captivity, albeit in different ways and at different scales. The wolves and wolfdogs at Mission: Wolf live out their days inside fences built of wire mesh and wood and steel; and yet most of them still could not be called tame, domesticated, safe, or friendly. However, they would not survive if 'let loose'. These animals do not fit neatly into the stories we tell ourselves about the categories of nature, wildness, and the nonhuman, and they do not fit easily into our human lives and stories of relationship, whether as captive or non-captive beings. These animals are obligate carnivores, predators that push at our conceptual, regulatory, and moral boundaries.

The stories we tell ourselves have consequences. I witnessed these on the individual scale through my own experiences learning how to be accepted (or even just tolerated!) by the more scared resident wolves; and on the collective scale through the encounters between other people and the animals at Mission: Wolf, where people's fear of the wolves often led the wolves to fear them in return. But these consequences I also witnessed in my study of various fields of literature, and in my review of how policies for 'wildlife management' and 'nature conservation' have been developed and implemented. These consequences are not necessarily terrible, but they are a reality: stories of wolves as 'keystone species' and ecological saviour can be as influential on particular human and nonhuman lives as might be stories of wolves as 'bad' and 'savage'; that is, as a threat.

Attending to the stories we tell about our relationship to the nonhuman world and nonhuman life can teach us about what matters, and why. Stories can help us see where we have been and they can help us see where we are going. But perhaps most importantly, they can help us see what we are doing right now that is heading us there. Stories from the past help us navigate the future. What stories do we want to pay attention to right now: ones that separate and isolate us? Or ones that connect us?

Stories of relationship are material and philosophical, as well as moral. By documenting the confrontations and encounters of my journey from Mission: Wolf and onwards and considering the specific and wider consequences of human ideas and stories, this thesis became an exploration of the material and philosophical in human-nonhuman relationships; of ideas of relationality itself; and of the ways ideas and stories can have real consequences that permeate, unexamined, broader spheres of human-nonhuman relations. Through this exploration, I was also led to consider the dynamics of power and ethics that shape our broad spheres of relations: that is, the always ongoing negotiations inherent to life on a complex multispecies planet.

IV. Living and dying well

Insofar as this is a story is about how to live – how to be, and how to relate – it also deals, necessarily, with how to die; because death is inherent to life, and to interspecies coexistence. What does it mean to live and die well? How does our knowledge of (or fear of) our own deaths shape how we relate to other beings? Why does it matter? What meaning can a good death offer to a good life? And what are the mechanisms of power and politics behind who gets to decide who lives, who dies, how, and what a good life or a good death is?

This thesis is thus also a story about how we think about our own lives and deaths, about our humanity and inhumanity, and about the ways we seek to satisfy or maximise our physical and psychosocial wellbeing and meet our ethical and moral obligations. Implicit within this story are the *stories we tell stories with* - stories of progress and property; products and commodities; wealth and value - and how we understand the ongoing relationships we are entangled within through the meaning-making devices of story. This thesis is a story about how we understand and do moral reasoning, and what encourages us to negotiate those boundaries of concern, in a way that can begin to acknowledge the priority of a biosensitive and response-able human-nonhuman relationship, the unavoidability of always ongoing interspecies interaction and co-adaptation, and the inevitability of life coming to an end.

This thesis is a story about wolves, but it is also a story about so much more. It is *my* story, weaving together the things I believe are important to pay attention to right now, to help take us toward the kind of future I want to live in. Ultimately, it is a story about 'getting along together' in a messy reality of interspecies coexistence.

It is a story about how, and how much, we are willing to modify our behaviour and how we understand what it is to live alongside not just other animals like wolves, but all the human and nonhuman living beings that surround us in our daily lives. Nonhuman lives intersect with human societies at all different scales – from the microbiome to the ecosystem and the planet - and the narratives of human decision-making affect all of us. This is a story about the ways we interact with and intervene in each other's lives, how we relate, and the consequences for all those lives of human ideas and actions regarding the current and imagined future arrangements of human and nonhuman beings that are desired. We are always already coexisting, and we can think categorically and/or relationally about that coexistence. In a world and system of relationships we have made meaningful, this thesis examines what it means to 'coexist'.

Chapter 1: Getting Along Together – an Introduction

Figure 2: Rosie and Tiger, rescued gray wolves living at M:W. ©PCannon, 2015

Each time I trace a tangle and add a few threads that at first seemed whimsical but turned out to be essential to the fabric, I got a bit straighter that staying with trouble of complex worlding is the name of the game of living and dying well together... We are all responsible to and for shaping conditions for multispecies flourishing in the face of terrible histories…

(Donna Haraway, 2016, Staying with the Trouble, p. 29)

1.1 Introduction

The story to follow will be a story of coexistence: of getting along together and why it matters, and of what living and dying well together means in a finite, complex, multispecies world. It is an attempt, in Donna Haraway's words above, at 'complex worlding' and 'staying with the trouble' of living a worthwhile life in a messy, uncertain world full of other beings. With these phrases, I take Haraway to mean facing complexity front-on and contemplating inherited stories (sometimes 'terrible histories') and possible alternative arrangements for our mutual flourishing and coexistence with non-human nature, and with wild life. This story of coexistence will be told in a flawed, bounded, and incomplete way as human-nature relationships change and co-evolve over time. It is not a story with a Hero, with Action, Conflict, and Triumph: with a clear beginning and an end. As Ursula Le Guin (1989) wrote, we need a new kind of story: one that acknowledges that which holds, carries, and contains over that which pierces. As she says, a story can be '… a sack, a bag… a medicine bundle, holding things in a particular, powerful relation to one another and to us' (Le Guin, 1989). This story is a net thrown wide, to thresh and winnow ideas, actions, and consequences, and to see what remains. We do not understand until we understand the question to which something is an answer (Ulrich, 2001). This story is not so much about answers as it is about questions.

Stories are the metacognition through which we humans understand ourselves, our societies and place in the world, and our relationships with others (Boyden & Bontes, 1992). We can reframe our metacognitions about how we live and die well in the world, in ways that involve culture and language, and in ways that improve our material and moral relationships with each other.

I will begin by introducing my case-study institution – Mission: Wolf – a sanctuary for rescued captive wolves and wolf-dogs, nestled in some remote mountains in the middle of Colorado, in the United States of America (USA). I will then connect this institution to the broader theme of my thesis, stories of relationship. I will close out this Introduction by laying out the thesis questions and thesis outline.

1.2 Don't Scare the Wolves

To start us off, I will set the scene for how the case-study sanctuary came to be, including the context of wolves in America, in the wild and in captivity. I will then explain the development of the philosophy and educational mission that carries the sanctuary on to this day. Learning how not to scare the wolves is just the beginning….

1.2.1 Wolves in America

Wolves were once widespread across the continental USA, inhabiting terrain stretching across all of the north, central, and northwest of America, and parts of the west and southwest (Seton, 1953). By the mid-1960s, their numbers had been reduced drastically from their estimated pre-European colonisation sizes of between 250,000 to 2million[1]. As the availability of their natural prey declined, due to pressures of expanding colonial settlement, wolves turned to livestock for food, and then themselves became the subject of destruction, including through government sanctioned programs of extermination (US Department of the Interior, 2016). The first documented wolf bounty was introduced in Massachusetts in 1630 (Massachusetts Environmental Police, 2023), and programs of trapping, shooting, baiting, and burning were employed at various stages over the following three hundred years to effectively eradicate the wolves from areas people wanted to live in and use. By the 1960s there were thought to be less than a few hundred remaining in the lower 48 States (i.e., excluding Alaska and Hawaii) (Mech, 1995).

Slowly, environmental movements turned the tide of this persecution, and in 1974 the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) and red wolf (*Canis rufus)* were listed on the Endangered Species Act (ESA) 1973 (Pub L. 93-205) (US Department of the Interior, 2016). At the time of the Act's passing, the only populations of gray wolves still surviving in the lower 48 States were in northern Minnesota, and on Isle Royale, Michigan (US Department of the Interior, 2016). Federal protection allowed for the slow rebuilding of wolf populations. However, in the first few decades after the protections offered by the ESA were instituted, recovery only occurred naturally across tiny portions of the wolf's previously extensive habitat.

Subsequently, wolf recovery across America has made headway, largely due to interventionist relocation and reintroduction efforts. The most well-known of these is the Yellowstone Wolf Reintroduction Program, which imported 41 wild-caught wolves from Alberta, Canada to be released into Yellowstone National Park between 1995-1997 (Phillips & Smith, 1997). At the same time, another 15 wolves from Alberta were released into the Frank Church–River of No Return Wilderness area in Idaho (Bangs & Fritts, 1996). Due to the success of these programs (measured by growth in wolf numbers, and flow on effects in associated ecosystems), other reintroductions have been undertaken of the Mexican gray wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*) into areas of Arizona and New Mexico beginning in 1998 (US Department of the Interior, 2016). Similarly, red wolf (*Canis rufus)* populations, after being almost entirely eliminated in the wild by 1970, were reintroduced through programs that released captive-born wolves into the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge in North Carolina (US Fish & Wildlife Service, 2023).

[1] Anecdotal estimates of pre-colonisation wolf population numbers vary considerably, and there are limited peer-reviewed research publications that narrow this scope.

These types of attempts are ongoing, usually controversial, and required convoluted regulation and legislation measures, including designation as 'experimental populations' (US Fish & Wildlife Service, 2023). The Red Wolf reintroduction program recently went through a period of turmoil: in 2018, doubt was cast on the viability of the program by a Species Status Assessment (US Fish & Wildlife Service, 2023). This was met with backlash from the wolf conservation community, on the grounds that the US Fish and Wildlife Service was not abiding by its legal requirements to protect the species, with a Federal judge ruling in this favour (Kahn, 2018). Since then, reinvestment in the program has occurred, and red wolf populations are further recovering (US Fish & Wildlife Service, 2023).

Similarly, the States surrounding Yellowstone National Park – Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming – are in a constant back-and-forth with the Federal government over the listing of the wolf as endangered under the provisions of the ESA (National Park Service, 2022). Recently, the 'Northern Rocky Mountains' wolf population was delisted in 2017, and the broader wolf population in the lower 48 states (the contiguous USA) was delisted in 2022 (US Fish & Wildlife Service, 2022a). Listing or delisting affects who has the responsibility for or the right to manage wolves, including their protection, or the reduction of their numbers. The result of delisting is usually the introduction of wolf hunting licences and quotas. In early 2022, the gray wolf, excluding the Northern Rocky Mountains population, was relisted as endangered and Federal protection was reinstated – based partly on the fact that successful wolf hunts in many states had reduced wolf numbers back below the requisite threshold to require federal protection (US Fish & Wildlife Service, 2022b).

The question of actively reintroducing wolves into the state of Colorado has been a hotly contested issue over the last decade, culminating in a successful popular vote as part of the 2020 US election to mandate the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission to actively reintroduce wolves. Proposition 114, now statute 33-2-105.8, directs the Commission to engage with stakeholders through state-wide hearings, and develop a plan to reintroduce wolves by no later than December 31, 2023 (Colorado Parks and Wildlife, 2023). This vote was one of the first of its kind in America, where a popular vote mandated an ecological management objective and a wildlife reintroduction program (Main, 2020).

1.2.2 Wolves in captivity

Alongside these developments and controversies in wild wolf population recovery and management over the last fifty years, a different problem was also emerging in America. The prevalence of wolves in captivity was a major hallmark of the 20th century, both in scientific breeding programs, as well as in other, less academic situations, including backyard breeders and 'mom & pop' zoos. Unlike the wolves bred as, for example, part of the Red Wolf Reintroduction programs, these animals were never intended to be released into the wild, and often ended up in

problematic situations due to their human owners finding their appropriate management and care challenging.

As one individual's attempt to address this issue, in the mid-1980s a young man bought the most remote block he could afford, in rural Colorado. There he built a sanctuary for wolves and wolf-dogs that could not find a place anywhere else in the human categories of wildlife conservation or animal rescue.

Over the course of the next three decades, this remote block became the lifelong home to many wolves and wolfdogs, all of whom had been born in captivity. In 1988 it became a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit named *Mission: Wolf*. Since then it has provided refuge to over one hundred animals, and now hosts upwards of 10,000 visitors a year (KW, pers comm April 19, 2018).

Kent Weber – the founder and current Director of Mission: Wolf – was interviewed as part of this doctoral project. Here, he explains the forces in America that he perceives as driving the need for a refuge like the one he created:

> *When we got masses of people that came here, they tamed everything and that meant to kill anything that they were afraid of. So, there was massive killings of all predators and the wolves were so social and so human-like… That's partially why we were successful at killing them the most. …*
>
> *By the 1920s, in a lot of North America, we had destroyed so much wildlife by then that the city people were going "oh my god, this is terrible, we need a zoo". And concrete zoos popped up so people could have their nature fix…*
>
> *And in a zoo, they populated and repopulated, and those went to roadside zoos. They repopulated, they went to mom-and-pop zoos. Those repopulated, and now you've got ridiculous amounts of wolves in captivity, and just a handful in the wild.*

The phenomenon of private ownership of wild animals has grown in America, and not just wolves: there are now more tigers in captivity in the USA than there are left in the wild in totality. In some states in America, there was (and still is) little regulatory control of such activities. Some people thought they could own 'a piece of the wild', while others felt they could make some money, so a trade in buying and selling wolves and wolf puppies emerged. The regulation of such trade differs by State, noting that not all states have laws against their ownership. Where such laws do exist, there are particular challenges in the regulation of wolf trading which are not present for other traded animals, such as tigers. Wolves and dogs are similar enough that they can interbreed, and reliably differentiating them genetically can be a time-consuming, unreliable, and costly process (Addams & Miller, 2012). Until very recently, this meant a breeder could easily just call an animal a wolf and sell it for a lot of money; or they could call it a dog and get rid of it to an unsuspecting buyer. Either way, people were buying them. As reflected by Kent:

> *…we have been taught, from day one, if you like it... What are you supposed to do? Buy it.*

What usually happened once people had owned their first wolf for a short while? People realised that a wolf is never not a wild animal. Wolves are not well suited to a human backyard

setting: they survive in the wild because they have a natural fear of new things, including humans. They are pack animals, ones which have been widely described (and mythologised) as fiercely loyal. Wolves are also 'neophobic', meaning their first reaction to anything new is usually caution or outright fear. These characteristics do not suit them well to environments where they are constantly meeting new people and having new experiences. This predisposition does not set them up well to be a part of human social environments. Their physicality, combined with their fearful natures, meant escaping their enclosures was often achievable for a full-grown wolf (partly due to regulations in many places that governed the maximum height of a backyard fence…even if there were no regulation against owning the wolf in the first place).

As private ownerships exploded across the USA, there ended up being a lot of animals in bad situations. If that animal was lucky, once it lost its first home, it found its way to a refuge like Mission: Wolf. If it was unlucky, maybe it was euthanised, or ended up at a fur farm. The biggest challenge these animals faced was that they did not fit neatly into human categories or expectations:

> *…These were all captive wolves. They were… in the middle. They weren't wild, they couldn't survive. They weren't domestic, they didn't do what you wanted*

Kent's efforts to create a place for these 'in the middle' animals took a lot of work, and not just the work of building fences or installing watering points. People's perceptions of the beings in front of them are often clouded by the expectations created by which category they place that being into, and the experiences of Kent and all the volunteers in navigating this challenge through creating and delivering the Mission: Wolf education program are rich.

I thought that understanding those challenges and learnings deserved a deeper investigation. The twin trajectories of wolf management and recovery in the wild in America, and the boom of captive wolf populations and ownership over the same period, offer a useful vehicle to explore ideas (of wildness, obedience, cooperation, acquiescence, participation, adaptation, and resistance) that are relevant to how we understand 'coexistence'. By looking at the stories we use to understand the consequences of the categories we place things or beings into, and what that means for how we relate to them, I was curious to explore the tensions between competing human desires for control and for wildness.

1.2.3 Mission: Wolf

For Kent, his passion for wolves only grew once he had bought the land and started Mission: Wolf's journey. Thirty years on, Kent still talks enthusiastically about what it was about these animals, the wolves and wolf-dogs he had rescued, that drove him to start the sanctuary, and to keep going. He is a natural philosopher, who has come to his perspective through lived experience. I relay his words here as a channel through which to lead you deeper into the story, I seek to validate some of his ideas with wider philosophical and academic discourses.

Here Kent describes the evolution of his goal for Mission: Wolf, from when he first took in a wolf dog, through until today:

> *…It was enough to give up basically a career, to make a commitment that "oh my god if I'm going to take you in and get a federal permit, I'm keeping you for your life". I figured I'd watch it go absolutely insane. And within three years, it would be so neurotic I would kill it to help it. That's what I figured would happen. I did not like this idea. I did not go wild with the idea "This is cool, this is fun, this is good". This sucks. … And if you do it, do it right. And man, what I learned was that these animals are intelligent, honest…. My guttural purpose would be… so that when I'm gone, there's a place left that has wolves. That's my goal.*

The level of commitment needed to follow through on this goal is still being learnt, 30 years later. Throughout his time building the sanctuary, and beginning to deliver the M:W education program, Kent had many experiences confronting people's assumptions about wolves. He spoke of his fascination with how people reacted:

> *Everybody we met was horrified and wanted to kill them; or they loved them so much they wanted to buy one and treated them like a god. And it was that contrast that really got… probably is what keeps me going today.*

Kent here is expressing his experience of the many people he met who were trying to rehome an animal: whether they were the original owners, Shelter or Animal Control staff, or other rescues or zoos. Kent is offering his characterisation of the ways people attempt to relate to the animal, that is, by categorising them. His statements here reflect the presupposed 'ideal state' of wildness with which wolves are usually associated. His statements reflect an anthropomorphism present in the relationship commonly expected of domestic animals, that is, obedience, and the converse expectation reflected in the definition of wild as 'self-willed' or 'untameable'.

The name of Mission: Wolf emerged following a particularly disastrous episode in the early days of the sanctuary, when Kent encountered some of the stark realities of providing for a pack of hungry wolves, in a remote, high-altitude part of the rather snowy state of Colorado:

> *We were five miles off the highway, we were stuck in snow, that's why the engine broke. And my partner's just dead asleep and I'm like "this is the freaking 'Mission Wolf'. After Mission Impossible.*
>
> *And it was in total pessimism. And the next day when the word Mission: Wolf came out, everybody laughed. I still don't think that today they know what was going through my head when I said, "this is Mission Impossible". And we got through that night, we slept in the truck, and got the wolf dogs that we'd rescued from another guy, that were highly aggressive, you could not touch them. Built a fence the next day, got them into the fence. And in 30 days we moved and got in here. And that was the start of… you know I'm just rolling my eyes…*
>
> *…Mission: Wolf just continues to be an evolution*

This eye-rolling relates to just how far Mission: Wolf has come since those early days of hardship. It is now a thriving sanctuary, for both people and wolves, and a buzzing nature education centre. But it grew slowly. It was named Mission: Wolf after the seemingly impossible mission being attempted: keeping a bunch of wolves and people alive and safe, often buried 5 feet

deep in snow, in a quiet nook at the end of a bumpy dirt road in rural Colorado. There were so many animals in need; so many animals being subjected to the whims and foibles of humans. While Mission: Wolf has provided refuge for up to 52 animals at one time, after years of experience – and learning – numbers stabilised around 30-35. This, however, has paled in comparison to need; Kent estimates he has turned away over 10,000 needy wolves and wolf-dogs in the time the sanctuary has been running (KW, pers comm April 19, 2018).

Kent knew he could not 'return them to the wild' by releasing them from captivity, so he aimed for the next best thing. Through establishing the Mission: Wolf sanctuary, he tried to bring the wild to them.

> *I felt sad that the wolf was in a cage, and I didn't have enough money to build a big cage. So, I was like well, there's a big forest, and I got a leash. And if you don't knock me down, I won't knock you down. And when I look back at everything I've done, those experiences on a leash are how you learn to talk to an animal.*
>
> *And we both got knocked down a few times. We both got scared, but real quickly we learned to not do that, neither of us liked it. And when the wolf got to explore a new habitat, it would pull its head out of the water in a creek and look at me like "oh my god this is a creek" and it was appreciative. You could tell they thought this was fun, let's do it more. So that's probably what really led the background for Mission: Wolf was rescuing un-socialized, potentially dangerous, animals. And, at the same time, trying to give them the best life we could even though they were in a cage, if that makes sense.*

Kent's description of his relationship with these animals reveals much about his perspective and motivation. He did not want to build a zoo, he wanted to find a way for him and the animals to 'live well' and get along together, within the confines of a society that did not always support such human-nonhuman coexistence:

> *The wolf is aware of every muscle I move and if I move wrong, I talk with a Wolf from hundred yards away, and I scare him.*
>
> *So then, how do you keep a Wolf happy in a cage?*
>
> *…to have an animal in a cage is wrong. I don't care if it's a human or a domestic or a wild animal, nobody should have to live in a cage. There's a lot of people, and a lot of domestic, and sadly, a lot of wild animals in cages. So that was the first thing was like why? Let's get them out of the cage! And many animals, you can. But a Wolf is one that… They're too social, and they don't survive.*
>
> *And… learning how many wolves were in cages… there was a lot of ignorant… naive, 'ignorance is bliss' experiences with wolves starting around 1981 and by 1985 I had a federal license for wolves, had a few wolf dogs, and learned they were honest, and they were true, and that the wolf was nothing like everybody told it would be, and it was actually one of the strongest companions and friends, as well as just independent-minded… And I've always worked with distraction rather than dominance.*

By giving the wolves as big enclosures as he could scavenge and scrape to afford; taking them as far away as possible from the thing they were most scared of (people!); and seeking ways to offer them enrichment and the relative freedom of a leash over an enclosure, Kent was attempting to understand and coexist with the wildness in them. This pursuit, and especially with

regard to how people understand, interact, and coexist with wild things (or anything 'other' to yourself, really), has been a driving force behind the continuation of Mission: Wolf as an educational institution.

Between five and 15 volunteers now live on-site full-time, providing all the animal care and maintenance needs of an off-grid sanctuary that houses 30 or more wolves and wolf-dogs at any given time. All the animals that live at Mission: Wolf reside there for life; and approximately 50 acres is enclosed for them, in an intricate network of corridors, playpens, fire bunkers, water pipes, and fencing. A further 200 acres of surrounding area has been bought and protected as buffer zone and nature reserve. Every year, around 10,000 visitors make the somewhat arduous journey out on (still very bumpy!) dirt roads. A membership program and donations are the only resources that sustain all this. For almost 30 years, Kent and his M:W co-director and partner, Tracy Ane Brooks, have loaded their bravest wolves on an old greyhound bus especially fitted out for the purpose, and travelled around the country. The 'Wolf Tour' offered programs that brought a 'part of the wild' into schools, community groups, universities and even government departments from New York to Washington.

Creating opportunities for people to learn about wolves through having up close experiences with them became a tenet of the became a tenet of the education program that took form at Mission: Wolf.. Kent here describes his perspective on the tension between giving the animals he'd rescued a place of refuge, while also facilitating those experiences:

> *We do our best to interpret [the wolves' needs]. And that's what motivates us to do the education. Let them have a purpose.*
>
> *So that's where that story is: we came first with one goal. To get the wolves a place to live, get them away from people, and allow them to develop their own unique personality.*
>
> *And that's where I've seen wolves that… their personality is they love people, they seek out people, they handle a leash, they get stimulus. They live longer than a wild wolf. They… as a Buddhist nun from India said, they have better karma than those poor wild wolves. And there's a whole story behind that. But that's why I've started to change my tune of "OK there's a reason for wolves to live in a cage" and that's to teach people why to protect them in the wild.*
>
> *You know, it's also to teach why they shouldn't be in a cage.*

The need to teach this point in particular, that 'they shouldn't be in a cage', was not unique to Mission: Wolf. Many other wolf rescues started popping up around America in the mid-late 80s, to deal with this problem of too many wolves in backyards.

However, there was a great deal of variety in the way different wolf rescues operated. Some did no education at all, while some charged very high fees, and guaranteed the chance to touch a wolf. Mission: Wolf was not driven by making money, and, apparently, its wolves were 'happy', as Kent reflects on here:

> *When we set up Mission: Wolf, it was the idea that we would need less money to operate on next year than we needed this year…*
>
> *And the Federal inspector 20-years-ago, that was in charge of a lot of these places, he went around and he inspected all of them. When he came out to Mission Wolf. He came in and did our inspection, he walked out and he was like "You know, you guys have the best, strongest, healthiest wolves in the country".*
>
> *And we had almost all wolves [not wolfdogs].*
>
> *He's like "they thrive here". And he says "You guys are really weird. You have all this habitat fenced".*
>
> *We had about five acres, which was huge at the time. And we had one 10x12 cabin and a little trailer house for people, that was it.*
>
> *And he's like "these other facilities wonder why they fail when they do their million-dollar fundraiser. They set up their beautiful visitor building, and nobody comes because they don't like seeing the wolves stressed out in the little cages". He's like "this is what makes wolves happy".*

This commitment extended onwards, to ensure that the sanctuary remained free and open to anyone: there was no fee to visit. This served a dual purpose: alongside the yearly 'Wolf Tours', the minimal cost of entry increased the accessibility of the educational experience (aside from the simple mission of actually *getting* to the sanctuary on the long bumpy dirt roads). It also allowed the caretakers to set the agenda and refuse demands a paying customer might believe they could impose. The philosophy that has kept the sanctuary running is simple, according to Kent:

> *That's what probably led to how Mission Wolf is today is: not allowing visitors, not allowing volunteers or humans in general, to put an expectation on the wolves. You can't buy your way in here. Generally, you can't come here because you know more than someone else. You just have to be dedicated to do it..*

This principle of no expectations was combined with another fundamental commitment to the wellbeing of the wolf residents. Everything about how the sanctuary operated, from how the volunteers went about refuge and animal care, to how visitors were introduced to the educational program, was premised on one thing: don't scare the wolves. As M:W volunteer, Mike, describes it:

> *Well first of all, this is their home. So, we don't want to frighten the animals in their home. It's like if I'm sitting in my living room or whatever, and someone comes in and yells and runs out, I'm going to be freaked out, and I'm supposed be comfortable in my own home. Same with wolves. So that's a big part. You know, this is their life. They're here because they can't be somewhere else, and we want them to have the best quality of life possible. So that's why we don't want to scare the wolves. It's not fair to them to be freaked out of people. And Kent always says, if you're scared of what feeds you, that's not an OK life. And us as people feed them, and we're supposed to be seen as stimulus, and exciting, and interesting – not scary.*

This principle grew to be the primary requirement of Mission: Wolf for all visitors and volunteers. This principle became more than just a key tenant of the education program, it was a pre-requisite for every step of the visit.

If you don't scare the wolves, you can go on the Tour.

If you don't scare the wolves, you can stay the night.

If you don't scare the wolves, you can feed them.

If you don't scare the wolves, you can go into their enclosure.

And if you don't scare the wolves, you might get to meet one.

1.2.4 Visiting Mission: Wolf

A visit to Mission: Wolf usually followed a typical format – and it started with initiating visitors with this premise of not scaring the wolves. Once visitors pulled into the parking lot on the crest of the hill, with the beautiful view southwest towards the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, they were greeted immediately by a volunteer staff member. The first thing that visitors learned, was that there are three rules that everyone - visitor, or volunteer – followed while at the sanctuary:

- Be aware of your energy levels – volume, activity, exuberance – stay calm, not running, yelling, playing;
- Be aware of your body posture and body language – keep your head up, be conscious of your surroundings, and avoid looming, leaning, or crouching;
- Do not put your hands on or near the fence.

(This introduction to the sanctuary is further detailed in Vignette 1 below)

Once all the members of a visiting group were initiated, they were invited on a walking tour, with a guide, past the enclosures of the more 'social' wolves – the ones that did not get too affected by crowds of random strangers being led past their enclosures and looking in at them. The guides put a lot of effort into educating their groups, and the format of the tour was designed to be very 'back-and-forth' – eliciting questions and answers from the visitors, instead of just lecturing them. Depending on the day, or the time of day, the wolves themselves would be more or less active – and a key task of the tour guide was to communicate to the visitors that the sanctuary was their home: if the wolves didn't want to come out to see us, or be seen, we weren't going to make them.

The tour usually took an hour to an hour-and-half, depending on the size of the group, the weather, how many wolves were active, and how many questions were put forward by the visitors. The tour concluded in the Visitor Centre, where visitors were encouraged to peruse the archive materials, make donations, or purchase memberships, artwork, books, or handmade bracelets made by collecting and weaving the naturally shed wolf fur. They were also advised they could return to any of areas passed through on the tours and see the wolves some more, as long as they remembered the rules, and remained aware of how the wolves were receiving them: if the wolves became agitated, or if they barked (a sign of fear in wolves, more than aggression), visitors were asked to move themselves on, away from that spot/enclosure.

Vignette 1: The wolf tour begins…

Hi, welcome….

Hope you guys didn't have too long a drive out here. We are pretty remote. Why do you think that might be? …That's right, to try and keep the wolves happy.

How big do you think a wolf's home usually is? Probably a bit bigger than here, huh? Well, if you look across to those mountains in the distance over there (they're the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, behind them is the San Juan valley, big ranching/agriculture area). Well, we here are at the foothills of Greenhorn Mountain. And everything between here and there is the territory of one of the last known wolves in Colorado. She was actually called the Greenhorn wolf. And everything you can see from here would have been her territory.

How far do you think wolves can run in a day? 5 miles? 20 Miles? Well, if they don't have to, they won't run very far. If they've got food and water around them, they'll stay right there. But if they need to, they can run over 100 miles in a day. Can you imagine that?

Neither can I.

But none of the wolves here will ever need to run that far. We make sure they're fed and healthy and happy. Do you know how to keep a wolf happy?

Well, one of the biggest things we aim to do here is not scare them. You guys heard the rules, so you should have a bit of an idea by now of how not to scare them. Don't run around and yell and scream and be really excited is one thing. But also, how you stand around them. How you approach them. That's really important to them.

Now you guys are lucky, you know why? You came on Big Feed Day. So these guys are all a bit more active, because they know we're getting their lunch ready. We feed them twice a week, on Wednesdays and Saturdays. That's when most of them get the majority of their food. We do feed breakfast every morning, that's mainly for the older wolves and some of the more doggy animals, they can't handle the feast and famine cycle. But for the full wolves we have here, they just get a little snack each morning, just so they don't get jealous. They're actually evolved to not eat every day. A wolf pack is only successful about 10% of the time when they go hunting. So, they're made for gorging and filling up and eating everything they can in one sitting. And then they'll lie around and sleep off the food coma over the next few days. So, if you had come tomorrow, they'd be hiding up the back of their enclosures, in the shade, sleeping.

And there's a reason we let them do that, a reason we give them nice big enclosures, with space to get away from us if we want. Because we've realised, if we give them that space, that sanctuary, they're usually happier to come and check us out when we do go past. Wolves are pretty curious animals. Has anyone ever been to Yellowstone? Yeh? Did you see a wolf? How far away? Well, what the scientists working up there realised was, they'd never get that close to most of the wolves, but once they left an area, the wolves would come and check out where they'd been. Sniff around and get all their scents. Pretty cool huh?

Well, let's move on around the corner here and get started with the Ambassadors - get you guys a chance to hopefully see some of these wolves!

Just one last warning before we get around there though. Do you think I can make the wolf come up and see you if it doesn't want to? If it's hiding up the back and sleeping in the shade? No, that's right. Because this is their home. And you wouldn't like it very much if I came into your bedroom at 2am and made you get up and play with me. So that's what it's like for them.

*

Wednesdays and Saturdays were the most popular days for visitors at the sanctuary, as those were they days all the animals received a lunch time ‘Big Feed’, and were usually more active in anticipation of the feast. This schedule mimicked the feast-and-famine cycle wild wolves are evolved to practice. Given a wolf hunt usually has a low success rate, they have to be adapted to gorging themselves when abundance is available, or going days with minimal intake. Over the years, Mission: Wolf had found this to be the most practical, consistent, and suitable method for maintaining the health of their resident wolves.

On these ‘Big Feed’ days, all the visitors on site who had already received the full tour were gathered together for another talk, usually given by sanctuary founder and director Kent. This talk focused specially on wolf behaviour, body language and communication, and was intended to allow visitors to enter the enclosure with the resident ‘Ambassador‘ wolves, the most social of the residents. Kent described this group of wolves as strange in that they were, more often than not, interested in meeting new people. While for most wolves this is the last thing they want to do, Kent had found there were always a few resident wolves who showed they were happy/willing to participate in this experience. These wolves showed this because they hung around where the visitors were and didn’t escape back to the more distant part of the enclosure that they always had access to. Nevertheless, Kent described the interactions he facilitated: he couldn’t teach the wolves how to ‘behave appropriately’, or ‘speak English’, but he could teach the people how to understand wolf behaviour, ‘speak wolf’, and communicate with the wolves in a way that enabled a mutually peaceful and educational interaction (KW, pers comm April 19, 2018).

These lessons included: ignoring the animals as we walked in (which had the effect of not inviting them to jump up on us); not taking in lose items (e.g. water bottles, hats, glasses), or setting down mobile phones or cameras (which had the effect of not offering treats or toys that the wolves could steal); and getting everyone to sit down close together on ground level logs (enabling the wolves to approach at face level).

Kent would then teach the visitors how to be prepared for what happened next: a wolf ‘greeting’. Once all the people were inside and settled on the logs, they were told to expect the wolves to come up to them: that the wolf would want to look the person in the eye, and sniff (or even lick) their teeth. For Kent, this was the key part of the whole experience, and he notified every visitor that ‘if you didn’t want to be sniffed on the nose by a wolf, then you shouldn’t come into their home (enclosure)’. This was how the wolves ‘shook hands’.

And so finally, this meeting, this encounter, is what has fundamentally framed the educational philosophy and purpose of Mission: Wolf, over their 32 years and counting.

> *The reaction the person has, an individual, when they meet a large predator that is in a calm situation… The animal is not subdued, scared, influenced by food. It's just an equal 50/50 on each side human-wolf interaction… That encounter is what we've done for thirty-two years now and I still don't know what it does.*

> *…when you learn to not move the muscle at the wrong time and how to befriend them: It's an opening to communication with people and other animals…*

Kent's belief in the power of an uncoerced encounter to confront and overcome prejudice and open a gateway for communication and understanding between humans, and between humans and nonhumans, is what had enabled him to take wolves on tour and into educational programs all over America, even to ranchers' meetings at the height of the debate to reintroduce wolves to the Rocky Mountains.

Kent recognises that this encounter will not be the same for everyone:

> *The thing I've learned from all the animals here in 32 years is one thing: Everything has a unique interaction. What works for me might not work for you. And what works for you might not work for me. And it doesn't matter as long as you've got something that works.*

This nuance was learned through the practical realities of getting along together with all the resident wolves and humans over the years. The power of the encounter itself, however, remained a constant.

This thesis is an attempt to explain and extrapolate from that encounter, those unique interactions, and about that communication. This means extrapolating, philosophically and morally, about what it means to consider, relate to, and coexist with nonhumans like wolves: to consider them as a being, with an experience. To ask and look for an understanding of what it means to scare a wolf, why it matters, and what might be learnt more generally about human-nonhuman relationships by learning not to scare the wolves. This has been an iterative and interactive process, involving an interrogation of both the wider literature and my data, focused on creating understandings of interspecies relating through exploring a space about how humans can and do interact with nonhuman lifeforms – with animals like wolves but also with the vast array of nonhumans we share our world with.

Understanding the principles driving Mission: Wolf – the framing and perspective that allows and enables the 'getting along together' that is this sanctuary in practice – is a good place to start this thesis because it is my curiosity about this which drove my intellectual and philosophical journey over the last 6 years. My own understanding of what was going on at the sanctuary was mediated and extended by my exploration of the literature around carnivore conservation, coexistence, stories of human-nonhuman relationship, concepts of responsibility, and different ways of thinking about how we relate, and relationality itself.

1.3 Stories of relationship

> *It's all a question of story. We are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story. We are in between stories. The Old Story—the account of how the world came to be and how we fit into it—is not functioning properly, and we have not learned the New Story. The Old Story sustained us for a long period of time. It shaped our emotional attitudes, provided us with a life purpose, energized action. It consecrated suffering, integrated knowledge, guided education. We awoke in the morning and knew where we were.*
>
> *(Thomas Berry, 1987, The New Story, p. 187)*

Through this thesis I was interested in looking at what is important to understand when thinking about coexistence, and about living and dying well in a multispecies world: what is the story that sustains us? If it was a matter of just restoring 'nature', of putting things back into the wild, then great. But if that wasn't enough. I wanted to understand what reimagining the story of our relationship to nature and nonhuman might involve. What is a good story of relationship? Because stories have power, and they have material and moral consequences.

Generalising can often be a challenging and fraught process. In this thesis, I do not intend to make grand claims about the proper and right relationship, the right story, that ought to be achieved between humans and nonhumans. This thesis is an interpretive and communicative exercise*:* through it I intend to question the perspectives and frameworks that inform our human stories; stories which make the nonhuman (in)accessible, and which mediate, constrain, or even prevent interspecies communication and peaceful coexistence.

The origin story of Mission: Wolf sets the scene for this interpretive and communicative exercise. I am using wolves as my example case, because that is what I had access to, and because the wolf has, in many places, a symbolic role in culture, myth, and story, often with strong emotions attached to them and that role. Their non-symbolic place in a complex web of socio-ecological management and (bio)politics also figures the wolf as a useful example with which to think relationally about human-nonhuman coexistence, morality, and responsibility.

Relationships and coexistence are processes, they are a *practice:* and one we can get better at. I am interested in the practical wisdom which is involved in becoming more skilful at communicating and adapting to and with other beings, and in improving the judgement rationality behind decision-making processes that mediate human-nonhuman coexistence.

But what does it mean to coexist? The Cambridge English Dictionary (2018) defines 'coexistence' as: 'the fact of living or existing together at the same time or in the same place'.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2018) adds: 'to live in peace with each other especially as a matter of policy'. Coexistence can be seen as foundational to society: societies have 'rules' or norms that are geared towards enabling its members to 'live in peace with each other'. Elaborate legal systems exist to arbitrate justice and fairness in the name of maintaining these 'rules' and promoting such peace and coexistence. Social norms are equally powerful in giving shape to what is acceptable and how to 'get along'. Democratic political processes exist (ostensibly) to fairly negotiate trade-offs and priorities to allow society to continue functioning. Individual and societal values can similarly be seen to recognise coexistence. Most English speakers would comprehend the idiom 'to live and let live'; though the level of agreement with, understanding of, and commitment to such a principle may vary between individuals and contexts. A concept of coexistence is salient, at least, as a form of relationship and interaction between humans.

Ideas of coexistence are prevalent in the conservation literature, especially in the field of carnivore conservation over the last decade (Bergstrom, 2017; S. Pooley et al., 2017). However, the use of the term 'coexistence' often does not come with a clear definition nor a practical interpretation. Pooley (2021) notes that the popularity of coexistence in conservation spaces/dialogues/discourses may lie in its conceptual plasticity, and that defining coexistence too narrowly could diminish its usefulness in analysing, understanding, or managing human-wildlife interactions across different species, systems, or cultures. In defining coexistence, Pooley (2021: p. 2) notes that:

> *Conservationists generally conceive of coexistence as more than tolerance; it is regarded as something more like stewardship, implying notions of care. As such, we need to remain alert to who decides on what or whom requires care, in what ways, and by whom will care be exercised—and what this implies for the objects of care, and for others impacted by such measures*

I am interested in picking up on these questions: of what or whom requires (or gives) care, how those requirements or obligations arise and are understood/responded to, and with what consequences for both human and nonhuman lives. Further, I'm curious about what it means in the first place to 'care' for and coexist with nonhuman others.

My time at Mission: Wolf, the conversations and interviews I conducted there, and my own experiences of the sanctuary drove me to delve deeper into what we mean when we talk about, or try to achieve, 'coexistence'. My ensuing journey through other research and literature brought me a plethora of stories, imaginings, and explanations of human-nonhuman relationships, and what it could mean to coexist 'well', to get along together, to live and die well together, on a multispecies planet.

1.4 Thesis Questions

The development of the thesis questions driving this project has been an iterative process, with questions and theories developed progressively as further ideas were prompted by the data collection experience, by reading, and from analysis of the data.

The design of the empirical observation phase of the project, at the Mission: Wolf sanctuary, is detailed in Chapter 2, and the questions used in the surveys and interviews with participants is included at Appendix 1: Interview Protocols.

Here, I outline the overarching questions that now give form to this thesis. For a long time, I described my research as broadly about 'how we think about nature and nonhumans, and what that means for how we live with and 'manage' nonhuman life'. This topic is expansive, and explains my wide forays into the literature, from arenas such as organisation theory and cognitive and social psychology, to conservation ecology, more-than-human theories and methodologies, and environmental philosophy and ethics.

What I now understand myself to have been doing all along was seeking to create a construction of an idea of coexistence that had integrity: one that drew from the depths of philosophical traditions, and that was grounded in practices of relationship building, including those exhibited at Mission: Wolf.

The questions that will be addressed with this thesis are now as follows:

1. How do we understand ourselves, nature, and nonhuman life? How do we understand coexistence? What is the story of relationship?
2. What do we do with that understanding? What are the consequences?
3. How can we think differently, and what might be the consequences of thinking differently?

I am using these questions to pry and prod at the definition of coexistence outlined above (Pooley, 2021). If coexistence is understood as something more than tolerance, something more like stewardship and implying care, then what does that conception offer as a story about what or who requires (or gives) care, how those requirements or obligations arise and are understood/responded to, and with what consequences for both human and nonhuman lives. What does it mean to 'care' for and coexist with nonhuman others? Is 'live and let live' an adequate setting from which decisions about and responses to wildlife and nonhumans are assessed? What would be involved in the acceptance of a coexistence paradigm in carnivore conservation, or in conservation more generally? Can such an arrangement be reached when the active consent and participation of one side – the non-human – is rarely visible/possible?

This story also questions how ontological and epistemological framings of 'nature' and 'non-human' structure 'coexistence' as a paradigm of 'conservation', that is, how do these philosophical framings inform and govern the bio-politics of human-carnivore interactions?

1.5 Thesis Outline

The thesis is structured thematically, and key excerpts of data from the case-study will be integrated into the relevant sections, reflecting the positioning of this thesis as an iterative philosophical and conceptual exploration rather than a linear scientific research report (Layder, 1998).

This introductory Chapter 1 has set the scene by introducing the place (the sanctuary), the institution (Mission: Wolf), and some of the human and nonhuman beings (Kent and the wolves) that inspired the further inquiry of literature and ideas that follows.

Chapter 2 will now outline the Research Approach and Design, including the methodological orienting concepts, the approach to data, and the sampling, data collection, and data analysis methods used. Importantly, while a case-study approach has been used to articulate contextualised and specific examples of the ideas being discussed, this data will not be presented as 'results' of an inquiry. The empirical qualitative data obtained through participant observation, surveys, and semi-structured interviews is woven into the thesis to complement the philosophical inquiry. The data will be spread throughout the thesis, as vignettes and quotes to complement the narrative.

Chapter 3 will situate this Research Approach and Design against a wider exploration of the literature through introducing the theoretical orienting concepts shaping the thesis.

Chapter 4 will address investigate the first noted research question, launching into a deeper discussion of the ways we understand human-nonhuman relationship, using the idea of *stories of relationship*. I will cover how our ideas of categories, subjectivity, agency, wildness, and ethical obligation affect our understanding of ourselves and nonhumans. I will close this chapter with my offering of a construction of coexistence,

Chapter 5 then address thesis question 2, and connects this discussion to the realm of conservation, particularly carnivore conservation, and the practical, social, and biophysical consequences of our ideas of nonhuman life, specifically with regards to the dynamics of power in decision processes about nonhuman life and death, and the use of a concept of coexistence in the practice of conservation.

Chapter 6 turns back to the example of Mission: Wolf to reflect on all of the above in terms of possibilities for communication, reciprocity, and coadaptation in human-nonhuman relationships, and the role of interspecies encounter, regard, trust, and response in facilitating coexistence. Here I will address thesis question 3, and draw everything together through a discussion of nonhuman interpretive agency, reciprocal communication, human-nonhuman trust, and relationality and coexistence in human-nonhuman relationships.

Chapter 7 will conclude the thesis by reiterating the themes covered, the perspective offered, and the conclusions reached.

Chapter 2: Research Approach and Design

Figure 3: M:W sanctuary, summer and winter. ©PCannon, 2016

What makes life possible? What makes life worthwhile?

(Richard J. Borden, 2014)

What it means to 'live well' is the conditions where one can satisfy what one believes to be one's own entitlements while at the same time respecting the entitlements of others

(Robert Dyball & Barry Newall, 2014, Understanding Human Ecology, p.204)

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will detail the research approach and methodology, and the research design. The placement of this chapter early in the thesis, before we delve far into the literature and ideas, reflects the development of ideas and knowledge undertaken in this research project. Chapter 3 will then detail the theoretical concepts I came to use to orient myself and this thesis.

For this project, I was interested in returning to the Mission: Wolf sanctuary and story: to explore what was happening there and see whether there might be anything useful or interesting to say about human-nonhuman relationships based on the experiences of the human and nonhuman beings coexisting there. My goal with this research was not to quantitatively analyse how people's experience at the sanctuary affected their views, beliefs, and/or behaviour. That would be a worthy study, though complicated and expensive (in time and money) to carry out. Rather, I was interested in prying into the individual meanings people were making about their time at the sanctuary – whether that was a day, a week, or a year – and seeing where that led me in my own exploration of the interplay between meaning-making, relationship, agency, and coexistence.

In this Chapter I will first outline my perspective on my positionality, and the framing of this research approach within soft systems thinking and more-than human methodologies. I will elaborate on the methodological concepts relevant to how I have undertaken this project, including the perspective on epistemology and improvement embedded in Flyvbjerg's (2001) use of 'Phronetic Inquiry', and the orientation to knowledge and importance of positionality inherent to Midgley's (2003) Systemic Intervention. I will close out the Approach section with reference to Lorimer's (2015) discussion of 'affective logic', and the growing body of more-than-human methodologies being employed in the human-nonhuman research space. I will also address questions of relevance and preference potentially awakened by using a case-study of a charismatic megafauna to discuss human-nonhuman relationships more generally.

The latter part of this chapter will then outline the design of the project as a case-study. I will detail the type of data gathered, the sampling process, and the data collection methods employed. Lastly, I will outline the data collected (as in the format and number of responses received/participants involved), and the methods of analysis used.

2.2 Research Approach and Methodological Orienting Concepts

The methodological approach to this research project is qualitative and interpretive. The research was designed with reference to Meadows' (1999) and Ison's (2018) articulation of a system as a *system of interest*, where the boundaries drawn around what is considered to be 'the system' is dependent on what is of interest. Midgley's (2003) research methodology of Systemic

Intervention best articulates why this perspective is important. Midgley articulates that researchers are always positioned in some way *within* the system: they are 'intervening' in the system simply by conducting their research, and yet need to be wary of mechanistic interpretations of pre-planned interventions. Soft systems methodologies, as these approaches are described, deal with the inherent limitations of any research in practice, while also giving primacy to that practice in relation to what can be considered 'improvement'. Judgments about who and what to include or exclude are boundary judgments, and they are an inevitable part of all research. Critical reflection on these judgments, a process also known as boundary critique, was done in iterations throughout this research project. Based on the soft systems methodologies of Ulrich (2001) and Midgley (2003), critical reflection was seen as necessary throughout, regarding, for example: the overall research design and development, the participant recruitment processes; the progress of individual interviews; and the progress of subsequent data analysis.

2.2.1 Phronetic Inquiry

Much scientific endeavour is built on enquiries and knowledge claims about whats and hows. What is this thing, how does it work? How do I/can I affect it; how does it/can it affect me? This perspective explains the salience of epistemic or technical knowledge, as captured by Aristotle's explanation of knowledge as *episteme* and as *techne* (for example, put very simply: episteme is how we understand gravity, techne is how we build aeroplanes to overcome it). Both these are knowledges grounded in materiality and logic, and human societies have improved materially and technologically through their application. Approaches to quantitative social science are often executed via a similar attention to *episteme* and *techne*. Outcomes are measured by their contribution to generalisable knowledge and predictive value. Such a model of knowledge might hold that research should produce verifiable/falsifiable hypotheses, of systems or human behaviour, that can then be tested and reproduced to add explanatory value. In this model, generalizability of results is considered important, and context-independent knowledge is valued over and above practical, context-dependent knowledge. Such a model of knowledge obviously has value – it has given us aeroplanes, electric cars, the internet, organ transplants and countless other innovations.

However, a key misunderstanding, according to Danish social scientist Bent Flyvbjerg (2001), rests on the premise that epistemic knowledge is the most important and valuable form of knowledge. This premise denies the lived experience of human beings, and ignores the challenges of nuance, negotiation, and decision-making inherent to living in a complex society and a multispecies world. Flyvbjerg thinks social science matters when it addresses questions both of why we do the things we do, and what we do with epistemic and technical knowledge once produced. He argues that we need context-dependent practice at making wise and good decisions: we need practical wisdom.

Flyvbjerg thus chooses to draw attention to other forms of knowledge also characterised by Aristotle: *phrone and sofia.* Aristotle was of course not the first human to think about knowledge in these ways, but the labels he applied to them are still salient and relevant today, so I will use them. Flyvbjerg argues that social science is not fulfilling its potential when it tries to merely be *episteme* or *techne* - when it tries to merely explain and predict human psychology or behaviour mechanistically. Rather, the skills of *episteme* and *techne* need to be balanced by an explicit attention to *phronesis* as an equally important practical skill. This is not to create or perpetuate a false dichotomy between natural sciences and philosophy or sociology or other social sciences, but simply to draw attention to the different ways that knowledge can be pursued, created, developed, or used. Social science matters, in Flyvbjerg's view, because it can help us ask why, and can help tell us what the right action is in a given situation (and meaning 'right' as in both effective and good). Why are things the way they are? Is this desirable? For whom?

Through applying this perspective on knowledge, Flyvbjerg is able to articulate the relevance of seemingly localised events and situations to broader discussions and discourses in human society and politics. There is much that can be learned from individual cases where practical wisdom or skill has been learnt or applied (or seen to be lacking). That is, Flyvbjerg makes the point that there is practical wisdom and usefulness in looking at specific situations and contexts and experiences. By examining what has been, could be, or should be done in 'seemingly localised' events, and then contextualising and extrapolating on these ideas and lessons with reference to theory and experiences from other contexts, much can be learnt. Thus, phronetic deliberation is not merely about what the abstract right or good is, but about what the right or good action is in context and when carried out. Thus, *phronesis* is explicitly about decision-making, participation, deliberation, and negotiation.

For Flyvbjerg, *phronesis* is also explicitly about power: by what mechanisms of power are the current arrangements (or purposes) set up? And who gains and who loses? This question of power is relevant to any discussion of desired outcomes or decision-making process – both things I am interested in with this thesis, especially regarding the desired way of relating with nonhumans and the political decisions made about which biological arrangements are desirable.

By turning an explicitly political and practical lens on my research, I have arrived at an inquiry that is specifically not reductive, positivist, or predictive. I have not set out to improve the epistemic understanding of human-nature/human-predator relationships. Likewise, I have not set out to improve our technical understanding of how to 'manage' predators and human-wildlife interactions. I do not intend to provide an answer for how humans and carnivores will or should coexist depending on what variable can be toggled or adjusted within the values/behaviours/intentions of each. Rather, my inquiry here is a philosophical and phronetic exploration of the mechanisms of power (including of powerful ideas or stories), and a reflection on the practical wisdom that might be found through examining a case of interspecies relating and coexistence. The practical wisdom embodied in the daily decision-making inherent to coexisting

with 30 or more canine predators in a close communal environment offers useful provocations about the broader human experience, and about how we think and do moral responsibility. I am not seeking to *prove* anything, rather, I am hoping to *learn* something.

2.2.2 Systemic Intervention

Systemic Intervention is the second methodological orienting concept structuring this thesis. Midgley's (2003) methodological framework offers a useful way to ground the phronetic inquiry being undertaken in this thesis. He encourages researchers to recognise they are always positioned in some way within the system, that they are 'intervening' in the system simply by conducting their research, and yet to be wary of mechanistic interpretations of pre-planned intervention. Midgley draws on Flyvbjerg but is not indebted to him. That is, Midgley (2003: p. 86) questions the distinction in philosophy of science between observation and intervention:

> *Observation should be viewed as just one type of intervention… and …Observation takes place using conceptual and emotional frameworks of interpretation.*

Midgley also encourages researchers to be reflective about the interpretive framing through which knowledge or results are understood. Like Ulrich (2001), Midgley emphasises the importance of articulating the boundary judgements inherent to the framing of a 'system of interest'.

As such, this thesis is not intended as an exercise in objective observation or positivist rationalism. Rather, I am trying to be non-reductive. As Sylvan and Bennett (1994: p. 148) articulate:

> *To take a swamp as an example… on the 'partist' view values, preferences, and other considerations would be focused on the particular mangroves, epiphytes, mussels, barnacles, crabs, water snakes, mud flats, salt domes and other entities of the swamp. In the holist view attention is focussed on the swamp as an integrated whole. In the no-reduction view, both the individual members of species and items of the swamp and the swamp as a whole are considered, but the whole is not reducible to the sum of the parts, nor are the parts considered to the exclusion of the relationships and value of the whole. The parts and the whole are respected, but neither is given respect or care at the expense of the other.*

I'm explicitly connecting Sylvan and Bennet's explanation of the no-reduction view (and noting their dependence on (Routley & Routley, 1980) for that definition) to Midgley's principles of System Interventions. That is, both as an exploration of literature and thinking, and as a data-gathering exercise, this research project is framed as an examination of the parts and the whole, and especially the relationships between everything. This entails explicit reflection: on the value and boundary judgements involved and the position of the research and myself as the researcher within the biophysical and socio-cultural world; on the choices made about the relevance and usefulness of theory and method; and on the action taken towards a concept of 'improvement'. As 'observations' are always interpreted within ontological, epistemological, and phronetic

frameworks, I have laboured to include commentary throughout on my positionality, perspective, and notion of 'improvement'.

2.2.3 Affective Logic and Charisma

Lorimer (2015) pushes back against the idea that conservation science can be perceived as purely rational. Rather, he argues, conservation scientists are operating from an 'affective logic' that is formed through their relationships with and experiences of the nonhuman world: he thus presents conservation as 'a set of tentative, multispecies processes of learning to be affected by the world' (Lorimer, 2015: p.39). Through this concept of affective logics as 'particular mode[s] of engaging with, knowing, and feeling towards wildlife', Lorimer (2015, p.39) is acknowledging the 'multiplicity of natural knowledge', where 'natures are materially multiple and can be legitimately known in many ways'. He goes on (Lorimer, 2015: p.122)

> *I understand an affective logic to describe a particular embodied disposition that establishes a habituated set of practices and feelings, often occurring in advance of reflexive thought, through which a person orients himself or herself within and makes sense of an encounter with human and nonhuman others. The argument in this work is that affect, understood in this fashion, has become the target of powerful modes of biopolitics (Lorimer p.122)*

Lorimer theorises these affective 'dispositions' as onto-epistemological orientations built through relationship and experience and forming a logic that influences researcher's positionality, perspectives, and decision-making. He also makes the point that such affective dispositions have consequences through the decision-making processes through which power and politics influence human and nonhuman lives and deaths. I explore these concepts in more detail in Chapters 3, and 5.

Lorimer further talks about the role of charisma in building affective logics. He does not used this word only in the way that we might commonly understand it as applied to wildlife – as in aesthetically charismatic megafauna. He thinks this aesthetic focus is narrow, and that while how we perceive and experience something is important, also important is how we know and think about something, and how we relate to it. He thus argues for the acknowledgement of other charismas: ecological charisma (material properties and relationships), and corporeal charisma (the affect and experience of encountering) in forming the affective logic that then permeates our orientation/position/pursuit of knowledge.

Lorimer also uses the concept of charisma in a more-than-human way, to note that nonhumans also perceive and experience charisma, in their own ways. And just like ours, nonhuman charisma has cultures, histories, and geographies. Together, we become what we are though 'situated interactions over time'.

I include these two concepts here, of affective logic and charisma, because I want to acknowledge that while I am using a case-study in this project of animal commonly perceived to

belong to category of ‘charismatic megafauna’, the ideas explored here should not be diminished by that simple categorization.

2.2.4 More-than-human methodologies

Reflection on my own affective logic in connecting me to my topic of study here (wolves, at least initially) helped me to reflect critically on the approach chosen for this thesis, including decisions about where to situate myself methodologically. As noted earlier, I consider this thesis to be a treatise broadly in environmental philosophy. There are many other places I could have landed, and I address some of these in the next chapter.

I have also made arguments in this chapter to distance myself from reductive, positivist, or typically quantitative approaches to understanding human-nonhuman relationships and coexistence. There has also been much study lately into human psychology and the cognitive and social factors affecting human-wildlife interactions, including regarding the capacity for or willingness of humans to accommodate wildlife. This research has typically been quantitative, positivist, and framed around understanding or modifying human ‘behavioural intentions’ and behaviour. I group into this field of research framings of ‘tolerance for wildlife’, ‘wildlife value orientations’, ‘human-wildlife conflict’, and ‘predator control’ (Bruskotter, Singh, Fulton, & Slagle, 2015; Fulton, Manfredo, & Lipscomb, 1996; Treves & Bruskotter, 2014). This thesis differs from these areas of study in a fundamental way. That is, I am interested not just in how humans behave, but in what is going on both sides - human and nonhuman. How do nonhumans adapt to us, and what about the *being* of the nonhuman is reflected in the human’s ability to adapt or modify their existence to coexist with the other?

I want now to take the time to connect my approach to domains of social science research that have taken similar approaches to that which I followed, the methodologies that are seeking to similarly decentre the human from such study.

For one vast example, the broad field of ‘Animal Studies’ has grown out of traditions in sociology, politics, public policy, religion, and philosophy, and could easily have been chosen to be the home of this study, as there are many similar veins of inspiration and inquiry, especially around phenomenology, the construction of conceptions of nonhuman beings, and dynamics and relationships of power (Waldau, 2013). However, to situate myself within this broad field would have required a significant retraining in its long history, and my personal grounding and training in Human Ecology was the lens through which I encountered my data and the literature

Within Animal Studies, however, I did find useful a conglomeration of methodological approaches loosely termed ‘more-than-human methodologies’, which explicitly call for new ways of doing research that attends to the peculiarities of nonhuman life-worlds. . Dowling et al (2017: p.829) examine ‘more-than-human’ methodologies in qualitative methods and praxis, and argue that a decentring of Eurocentric human privilege in research design, production, presentation, and impact is not only needed but crucial to different types of knowledges emerging:

> *…. researchers need to push themselves further – they need to take seriously the ontological politics that have silenced and rendered invisible so many more-than-human agencies over time.*

This call, to push past the ways that ontological and epistemological assumptions can silence and obscure potential knowledges or agency beyond the human, provides me with a methodological cohort (Barrett, 2011). Within that cohort, innovative, often experimental, choices are made about method and methodology, choices that inspired me even if I did not myself veer too far off the well-trodden path of qualitative survey and interview tactics. Finding ways to access and present the nonhuman experiences of my case-study institution while also avoiding anthropocentric and anthropomorphic pitfalls was important to me. Attentiveness to the possibility of alternative ontologies and epistemologies drove me to include vignettes in this thesis that do not simply relay quotes from my (human) participants, but which attempt to access my own interpretation of the nonhuman beings I was in relationships with at the sanctuary (see e.g., Vignette 3, Vignette 8, and Vignette 9)

Similarly, the notion of 'story' – stories of relationship and *stories we tell stories with* – is a device I am using to critically reflect on the centring of the human experience and reference in understanding human-nonhuman relationships. Chapter 4 delves into this in more detail.

*

To sum up, Flyvbjerg's *phronesis* and Midgley's *Systemic Intervention* provide the methodological grounding and orientation to research that has informed the research approach in this project. This orientation includes the perspective on the kind of knowledge being pursued; the reflection on positionality and competence in research; and the boundary judgements made about what constitutes 'improvement' aimed for in the system of interest. Lorimer's (2015) framings of affective logic and charisma aid that reflective practice, and guidance is taken from the more-than-human methodologies gaining traction across research and literature.

2.3 Research Design

The research design is a case-study approach. The case study approach is a comprehensive research strategy that can involve the study of a small number of instances of a phenomenon in order to explore in-depth nuances of the situation, and the contextual influences on, and explanations of, that situation (Midgley, 2003).

As I had an existing relationship with the case-study organisation, the Mission: Wolf sanctuary, I may have been perceived to be in a position of power over the potential participants if I was seen to be an educator associated with the sanctuary. As such, negotiating my role as a researcher in that context, and the potential issues of bias or the perception of bias or power, required a critically reflexive process. It was important to make clear to participants, both verbally and in the information materials handed out with their consent form (See Appendix 2: Participant

Consent Forms), that their ability to access the educational programs at the sanctuary was in no way influenced by their participation or not in this research project, nor that their continued engagement in Mission: Wolf activities was dependent on their participation in the research.

Thus, in designing this research project I took care to try to identify my own biases and paradigms, and how previous theories and social science literature were influencing what questions I was asking, both broadly in the research project, and individually in interviews with participants.

Furthermore, the design of the data collection was informed by Layder's Adaptive Theory (Layder, 1998). Adaptive Theory is a methodological approach to negotiating the interplay of theory and practice. It accepts that theory informs the design of research, but existing theories are not taken to be definitive (Layder, 1998). This means designing the research to build from orienting concepts in the literature (introduced in Chapter 3), and building in processes of reflection and adaptation throughout the research design, data collection, data analysis and writing phases of the project. That is, flexibility in the research design and data collection processes allowed for ongoing reflection on the focus and direction of the thesis.

It was also important to me to consider how this seemingly localised case of a wolf education program connected to wider contexts of human-animal and human-nature relationships, and what limitations there might be on what I could say about those broader contexts. The research was then designed to allow participants to present their own constructions and paradigms of understanding about their experiences and learnings at the sanctuary. For these reasons, I collected qualitative data through open-ended survey questions, specific survey questions, and semi-structured interviews. This allowed for deeper and more insightful responses to questions of the *why* of phenomena, as opposed to the breadth that quantitative studies often offer about the *what* of phenomena (Flyvbjerg, 2001).

2.3.1 Data

Qualitative data was gathered as empirical explorations of participants' beliefs and assumptions about wolves, including discussion of their perceived relationship to the animals. What was of interest here was the depth and breadth of views, not their prevalence. Further, interview data was collected about the process of negotiating these paradigms via involvement in the experiential education program at Mission: Wolf, both from the visitors participating in it, and the volunteers delivering it. Questions were intentionally open and focused on the process and significant components of the Mission: Wolf education program, and participants' experiences of learning. This included initial open-ended questions such as 'what have you learnt in your time here?', and 'what do you think is the most important part of the education program?' Participants were then prompted to elaborate on whatever they considered the significant components of their experience and learning. This open-endedness was a key methodological design feature of the research project. Theories of categorisation did inform the overall design of the research project,

based on the author's prior understanding of the M:W sanctuary and education program. However, to avoid leading questions and presuming outcomes, questions were not directly targeted around the issue of categorisation, nor did they draw directly from the concepts and theories that were likely to be unfamiliar or inaccessible. The aim was for participants to construct their own interpretation of the experience, using their own language and their own categories.

Thus, the data collected for this project was in the form of a qualitative survey with open-ended questions, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation by the researcher, positioned as I was as a volunteer within the institution studied.

I asked visitors what they thought the most significant part of their experience had been (see Appendix 1: Interview Protocols for the full list of questions). I asked them if they thought they'd learnt anything from the animals. I asked them what they thought about ideas of coexistence and communication (elements woven throughout the Tour). I asked volunteers why they'd come to live at the refuge. I asked them what they'd learnt in their time there. I asked them what they thought the most important part of the education program was, and I asked them about their most difficult or challenging tour group (and asked them to define difficult or challenging for me in that context). I asked them what they found rewarding, or when they felt most effective. I asked them what they thought about wolves before they came, and what they think now.

Data in this thesis is not packaged neatly into a 'Results' section, because that is not the relationship between knowledge and observation that is constructed or attended to here. My data became prompts that guided me though the literature – seeking explanations and connections, theories and stories that helped me make sense and make meaning. Seeking ways of thinking and understanding human-nonhuman relationships that avoided the arrogance of anthropomorphising, while also rejecting the selflessness of reductive biology.

The data is nonetheless empirical. It is information received by means of observation and a systematic approach to experimentation/inquiry. It was analysed methodically and iteratively and it informs the progression of theory and ideas logically. This qualitative data offers the answer to some questions - but also points towards more questions.

2.3.2 Data Collection Methods

2.3.2.1 Surveys

This step involved visitors to the sanctuary being invited to complete a short survey questionnaire, upon arriving to the sanctuary, and prior to their involvement in any component of the educational program (see Appendix 4: Preliminary Questionnaire). Visitors were then invited to participate in semi-structured interviews, following their participation in the full education program (tour and behaviour session/wolf visit). The reason for starting with a questionnaire was practically and methodologically motivated. As the research was premised around capturing

participants unaffected perspectives and assumptions, it was imperative that this data be captured before visitors engaged with the education program. The survey gathered data about why people had chosen to visit, and what were their current knowledge, perceptions, and values of wolves. It was important to gather this information while also limiting the potential disruption to visitors' experiences at the sanctuary – such disruptions may have affected their willingness to participate in the research – thus, a questionnaire was proposed as the most effective initial survey instrument.

As part of the focus of this research was to look at the lasting effect of the educational experience at the sanctuary, it was also considered valuable to collect data at a later date. Participants who completed the initial questionnaire were invited at the end of that form to indicate their willingness to participate in an online questionnaire at 3-months post-visit. If they were willing, they were asked to submit their email address on the form. Online questionnaires were then created via Qualtrics and sent via email at the appropriate time. At each point of contact, visitors were reminded that they could withdraw their participation at any time (see Appendix 1: Interview Protocols and Appendix 3: Information Sheets).

2.3.2.2 Interviews

Interviews were also conducted with all the volunteer staff of the sanctuary, including the refuge Directors, the Education Caretaker, other core and long-term staff, and short-term summer volunteers. These interviews were longer and included more detailed questions about the human-wolf relationships experienced by the volunteers, given these participants had a more prolonged engagement with the sanctuary than day visitors, including more opportunity to form individual relationships with the animals at the sanctuary. Interview questions started by gathering information about the participant's background and reasons for being a volunteer at the sanctuary (or in the case of the directors, starting the sanctuary and developing the education program). Volunteers were then asked about their experience engaging with the education program themselves as learners and then deliverers of that program. The volunteers were also asked to discuss their roles as animal caretakers and elaborate on their 'relationships' with the wolves.

These first round of interviews gathered qualitative data of the experiences of the volunteer staff both as visitors/experiencers of the wolf sanctuary themselves, and as educators creating and delivering the education program to others. The volunteer staff interviews were done first for both methodological and logistical reasons. Logistically, this process will allow for a smoother data collection process throughout the rest of the project, as the intended research format and potential limitations (including interview location etc) were trialled at times when more flexibility was possible – allowing the visitors surveys, which were much more time-sensitive, to flow smoothly. Methodologically, this initial round of qualitative data collection allowed for a preliminary iteration of analysis as per Layder's Adaptive Theory (explained above). This helped to focus and strengthen the next step of data collection involving visitors to the sanctuary, where logistical constraints would be greater. The number of volunteer staff currently residing at the sanctuary

was relatively small (~ 15 at the time the interviews were conducted), and these interviews were conducted prior to the summer holidays beginning, allowing for them to be reasonably lengthy and in depth (average time = 1hr).

Following completion of the questionnaire (see above), visitors to M:W were also invited to participate in an interview following their involvement in the educational experience. These interviews were focused on mapping any processes of change and re-framing participants expressed following the educational experience at the sanctuary. As indicated below regarding the principle of saturation, there is a logistical challenge inherent in collecting qualitative interview data. Therefore, it was not expected that all visitors who participate in the questionnaire or the educational program would be able to participate in an interview.

Visitors who were interviewed were done so after they had participated in the full educational program (tour and wolf 'behaviour session' and interaction). Questions in the interview were designed to draw out what the participants considered to be the significant components of the education program, including where they thought they had learned something (e.g., from the wolves, from the tour, from observation of the sanctuary's operations). Participants were also encouraged to consider how their new knowledge fitted in with their previously stated answers to the survey questions.

All quotes included throughout this thesis were gathered from these interviews, whether included in-text, or in a *Box*.

2.3.2.3 Participant Observation

Participant Observation is a method often used by social scientists, but it is also now being used more broadly in applied research fields. The key thing to note here is positionality of the observer: that is, they are positioned *within* the research context, and as such, the relationship between observer and observed are not only much closer, but much more explicitly recognised and described.

As the researcher, throughout the data collection, I was embedded in the situation being studied – I was a volunteer tour guide and animal caretaker at the sanctuary. My observations and reflections thus formed part of the data collected. A detailed journal was kept throughout the fieldwork period, including notes on the adaptively managed conduct of the research, and reflections on ideas, findings and insights being developed. As I was residing at the sanctuary for the research period, alongside other volunteer staff, the Information Sheet for Volunteers included a note about this activity in particular.

While ethnography is a somewhat similar method of scientific study and description, I do not want to claim to have completed an ethnography., Such a method is common in the field of anthropology as a means to study people and cultures. The researcher immerses themselves into the context or group being studied, enabling superior access and allowing personal experience and reflection to form data in themselves. Ethnography is starting to be applied more broadly, and

the usefulness of an ethnographic lens for explaining phenomenon in other social sciences is being recognised. Whilst my personal experience at the sanctuary, both prior to and during this research, formed my affective logic, and informed my bias and approach, I did not find the full extent of the framing of ethnography to be applicable.

Where data from participant observation methods is included in this thesis it is labelled as a *Vignette*.

2.3.3 Sample

The principle of saturation was employed to design the sample size, and the data collection process was designed adaptively to account for this principle. Data saturation is reached when no new information or themes emerges from the data (Boddy, 2016). As a principle, saturation is theoretically sound. However, in practice, it has been shown that saturation can be challenging to recognise or adequately manage for, as it requires a level of uncertainty and adaptability to be built into the research design. Research has shown that saturation in interviews is usually achieved within the first 6-12 interviews, and sample sizes above 30 individuals are considered to be large and unwieldy for the purposes of in-depth analysis (Boddy, 2016). With this in mind, an estimate of the required number of questionnaires was given as 20-30, and of interviews as 20-30. However, given that this project is being designed under a methodology of Adaptive Theory (Layder, 1998), an assessment of the level of saturation was done at several points throughout the data collection phase. This design component allowed for adaptive management of the participant pool, such that an appropriate amount of data was collected.

The data collection phase of this project was undertaken at the Mission: Wolf sanctuary. This location was chosen for several reasons, both methodological and logistical: This institution has dedicated itself to an educational mission of re-framing the human-wolf relationship, and 'improving relationships between humans, animals and the world around them'. This particular educational context provides a unique opportunity to study the processes through which people reframe their understanding of, for example, nature, animals, and the way we should live in relation to them. I also had a long-standing relationship with the sanctuary and education centre and was familiar with its operations and philosophy. This relationship allowed for confidence in the commitment and support of the institution for the research intentions and activities.

Interviews were requested of all the current volunteer staff, including the two Directors. Consent was given by all. This group of volunteers included an array of experiences at the sanctuary, from their first week there, to several years into the volunteering contribution, and across all the various volunteer roles (Office/Admin and Operations caretakers, Education caretakers and tour guides, Animal and Refuge caretakers, and Founders/Directors).

Visitors were recruited on the two main feeding days (Wednesdays and Saturdays) across a period of approximately two months (April-May 2018). They were initially recruited to complete

a preliminary survey, designed to capture some of the attributes, along with their prior knowledge and impressions/perspectives of wolves generally, including any previous experiences seeing or owning a wolf, and their perspective on wolves in the wild (see Appendix 1: Interview Protocols).

A smaller sample of visitors were then recruited to participate in semi structured interviews following their tour. This meant they had participated in the full education program, including the walking tour of the sanctuary, the wolf behaviour talk that preceded entering the wolf enclosure, and the visit inside the enclosure itself. Most of these interviews were done in groups of two or three participants, due to time pressure.

- I interviewed 14 volunteer staff, including the two founders and Directors.
- I surveyed 86 visitors on arrival at the sanctuary, and did follow-up interviews with 16 of them following the tour, the behaviour session, and the visit with the wolves. These interviews were mostly done in groups of 2-3 due to time restrictions.
- 19 participants (including some of those interviewed) then responded to a follow-up survey, three months later.
- Lastly, I wrote many pages about my own observations and experiences as a participant there: as a visitor and volunteer myself.

2.3.4 Data Analysis

The qualitative data was then analysed thematically using N*Vivo 12 software. Coding was undertaken in iterations, based first on a thematic coding of a piece of writing produced during and immediately following the data collection phase, and then on the emergent themes from the data itself. The data was then examined specifically for themes of categorisation, encounter, and communication to examine the paradigms of human-nature connection articulated and reflected upon by participants. The codes used are included at Appendix 5: Codes.

Scientific rigour, in this context, is not reliant on independent observation or statistical analysis. Rather, rigour for such a small qualitative study is found in contextualising the data theoretically and historically (Flyvbjerg, 2001), hence the extensive and philosophical introduction to this thesis, and hence the iterative nature of the coding and analysis process. My own experiences, and the experiences of my research participants as gathered through the survey and interview process, were interpreted through the methodological lens I present next (Chapter 3), and against the backdrop of the extensive theoretical work on human-nonhuman relationships and coexistence discussed throughout this thesis.

2.3.5 Conclusion

Overall, the data collection phase of the research project took four months to undertake, between February to June 2018. The data collected through the approach and methods detailed in this chapter are presented throughout the thesis – you have, of course already encountered several snippets. By presenting the data in this way it is serving three purposes:

- To support the theoretical points from the literature,
- To reinforce the tropes and default positions from the literature where that occurred,
- And to offer weight to my critiques and discussion where that did not occur.

With the next chapter I will now build the broader conceptual infrastructure of this discussion, through articulating the conceptual boundaries and architecture of ideas I've constructed to house my thesis.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Boundaries – a Theoretical Orientation

Figure 4: rescued gray wolf Illiamna, and M:W Director Kent Weber. ©PCannon, 2015

Environmental philosophy examines our relation, as human beings, to nature or our natural environment: it reviews our philosophical understandings of nature and our conceptions of nature's values and entitlements; it explores how we are to live with and in nature and to what degree nature is or is not implicated in our own human identity….Environmental philosophy includes in its scope all the core discourses of philosophy: metaphysics, our assumptions about the basic stuff and structure of things; epistemology, how we come to know and understand nature and how different epistemologies reveal different aspects of the natural world; aesthetics, the patterning that may or may not be taken to confer meaning or value on nature; and ethics, the morality of our treatment of living things and systems

(Freya Mathews, 2014, Environmental Philosophy, pp. 543-4)

3.1 Introduction

This thesis can be read as a treatise in environmental philosophy, as encapsulated by Mathews' broad definition given above. As such, this thesis covers a range of topics and draws on concepts from across many fields: touching on, as Mathews encourages, the metaphysical, epistemological, aesthetic, and moral. More specifically, I am interested in the judgement rationality that holds all these aspects together. That is, how we build judgments based on what we know and think, not just about objects of knowledge, but about objects of concern. If epistemology is understood as knowledge about, for example, what a wolf eats, then judgement rationality is what is done with that knowledge – e.g., 'shoot the wolves', or 'wolves are a component of a healthy ecosystem'. This thesis is intended to be an exploration with depth and breadth of what it means and why it matters to flourish as a nonhuman entity, in particular a wolf, and as a human that accepts these nonhuman entities, wolves, flourishing.

In the same way that Mathews invokes an understanding of environmental philosophy as concerned with the metaphysical, the epistemological, the aesthetic, and the moral; I want to consider relationships across a spectrum of philosophical angles. How we think about and do relationships reveals that they are political - they have dynamics of power; they are moral – they reflect ideas of what is 'right' or 'good'; they are ontological and epistemological – they are how we understand and know; and they are material and practical – they are what we are and do.

This chapter articulates the theoretical perspective and orienting concepts of this thesis. These orienting concepts are conceptual boundaries, and they provide a rich context for the ways I have interpreted and presented my data and ideas here. Chapter 2 previously detailed the Research Approach and Design, including the Methodological orienting concepts, and the methods of data collection and analysis employed for the qualitative empirical research component of the project. This chapter is intended to contextualise the research against broader ideas, literature, and philosophical traditions.

I will begin by defining the boundaries of my 'system of interest' here; a necessary part of doing research (Ulrich, 2001). This section is intended to reflect on the boundary judgements made in this project, through briefly discussing the many perspectives and fields of study that are relevant to this thesis but which do not define the scope or focus of this project or to which this thesis does not speak. Within these fields there are many theories about the human-nonhuman relationships, but judgements have been made to either designate these as outside the boundaries, or as not entirely defining the 'system of interest'. The purpose here is to acknowledge the many relevant fields of study in which much great work has been undertaken, but which do not encapsulate the whole perspective I am interested in here. These relevant fields include the many approaches to conservation currently being explored, including rewilding, novel ecosystems, ecosystem services, connectivity conservation, and ecological restoration more generally. Other relevant fields include the approaches to understanding human behaviour in relation to nature as

covered by, for example, the keywords of ‘tolerance’, ‘wildlife value orientations’, and ‘human-wildlife conflict’.

I will then further situate this thesis as an inquiry in environmental philosophy by articulating my theoretical lens of Human Ecology, and examining the meaning of a truly *environmental* ethics, drawing mainly on the work of Richard Sylvan (previously Routley), David Bennett, and Val Plumwood (previously Routley).

Lastly, I describe the theoretical orienting concepts that shape the rest of the thesis. I have chosen to here articulate five intersecting concepts that have emerged with the most clarity and strength from my theoretical explorations throughout this project. These concepts are themes throughout this thesis, so my coverage of them here is not exhaustive. They will be developed in more detail throughout the following chapters. I lay these concepts out here as orienting markers, mainly to introduce them, show the connections between them, and to allow the rest of the thesis to build on them.

3.2 Boundary Judgments

3.2.1 Indigenous perspectives

I also want to acknowledge here is that there are many different ontological, epistemological, and phronetic perspectives on the human-nonhuman relationship beyond those that dominate in colonial societies and conservation academia and policy circles (acknowledging that there is a plurality of perspectives within these societies and circles too). People from Indigenous cultures all over the world hold a plethora of perspectives, knowledges and understandings alternative to the reductive/positivist paradigm present in much scientific discourse (Yunkaporta, 2019).

Within this thesis I do not intend to dismiss these valuable and extensive indigenous philosophies and moral perspectives. Rather, I wish to avoid appropriating or misrepresenting cultural perspectives that are not my own, and to which my data and associated explorations of the literature cannot speak directly. Decolonising conservation research and practice, and considering in-depth the frameworks of coexistence held by people from cultures with long, deep, contextual relationships with landscapes, ecologies, and wildlife is an important component of the work I am focused on with this thesis.. As an Australian woman raised within the privileges of a middle-class white-presenting family, educated in the colonial system of knowledge and research, but with Indigenous Australian history that my family is only just beginning to understand… I am conscious of appropriately acknowledging the indebtedness of the concepts I explore in this thesis – of relationality, entanglement, coexistence and storytelling – to long histories of indigenous thinking.

While an entire thesis (indeed several) could (and should!) be written about the ways that animal studies, cultural anthropology, and environmental philosophy and ethics are circling back

to indigenous thinking: indigenous metaphysics, ontologies, epistemologies, spiritualities (TallBear, 2011). This is not that thesis; however, I hope that this thesis does contain an awareness of, and that the writing throughout reflects, the indebtedness I describe above.

3.2.2 Context in Conservation Literature

To begin, I want to acknowledge that while I intend for this thesis to explore concepts and consequences relevant across many realms of human-nonhuman relationships, and to offer an account that goes beyond only human-animal relationships, there are several key movements in transdisciplinary conservation science and ecology from which my work emerges. There are many different interpretations of the ecological science behind 'conservation' generally, all with their own stories of relationship and views on 'improvement' in the system of interest. These include, for example: Biodiversity Conservation, Ecological Restoration, Ecosystem Services, Rewilding, Connectivity Conservation, and Novel Ecosystems. All these permutations represent different (or overlapping) ideas about nature, nonhumans, and human-nonhuman relationships.

I have chosen to not situate this thesis within any of these discussions to the exclusion of others. The risk here is in ignoring much of the good research and science being done in each area. However, I weigh that risk against the danger of compartmentalising myself into a position dishonest to where I ended up: with an interest in how the idea of coexistence is constructed, and the stories through which we conceptualise human-nonhuman relationships. These go beyond any single approach to conservation, although it is interesting to pay attention to the stories that have emerged as a result of advocates of each approach attempting to define the differences between them.

Over the last decade there have been growing calls for an explicit reconsideration of conservation management dynamics, and a reframing of the human-nonhuman relationship within management paradigms. This includes a progressive questioning and reframing of the current approaches to conservation governance in the context of global change (Colloff et al., 2017, Wyborn et al., 2016, Lorimer, 2015, Collier and Devitt, 2016, Ellis, 2015, Higgs, 2017, Ison and Schlindwein, 2015). It also includes an examination of ideas of 'coexistence' with wildlife, particularly carnivores (Bergstrom, 2017, Carter and Linnell, 2016, Dorresteijn et al., 2016, Frank, 2016, Boitani and Linnell, 2015, Chapron et al., 2014, Hartel et al., 2019).

For example, discussions abound in conservation literature about:

- different mechanisms for (and morality of) lethal versus non-lethal control (often labelled coexistence') (Bergstrom, 2017; Lute & Attari, 2016; Lute, Navarrete, Nelson, & Gore, 2016)
- the goal of rewilding and 'self-willed' nature' (Bauer et al., 2009; Monbiot, 2013)

- the benefits of managing holistically for ecological processes and trophic cascades (Boitani and Linnell, 2015, Linnell et al., 2015, López-Bao et al., 2015, Treves et al., 2016)
- the desired paradigm and dynamics of human-nonhuman interactions ('human-wildlife conflict', Wildlife value orientations, tolerance for wildlife etc) (Bruskotter et al., 2015; Fulton et al., 1996; Treves & Bruskotter, 2014; Treves & Karanth, 2003)

These trends in conservation ecology governance and practice reflect changing stories about our relationship to nonhuman life, and I expand on this further in Chapter 5. They also reflect ongoing movements in conservation practice relevant to environmental philosophy and ethics.

Furthermore, this movement in conservation literature towards an attitude of coexistence is occurring in parallel to strengthening calls more generally, in society and literature, to 'reconnect people and nature'. These calls come in fields ranging from sustainability science (Abson et al., 2017, Ives et al., 2018, Klaniecki et al., 2018), through to education (Barrett et al., 2016, Grun, 2005) and human-developmental studies, especially as made popular through ideas of the 'the human costs of alienation from nature' (aka 'Nature-Deficit-Disorder') (Louv, 2008). Similar to the movements towards coexistence in conservation literature, these calls for a 'reconnection with nature' in society can be seen to build on long traditions in environmental philosophy and environmental ethics, stretching back through various permutations of conservation theory and practice to Aldo Leopold's (1966) 'land ethic', and in systems theory back to Meadows (1999). Abson et al. (2017) recently declared 'reconnecting people and nature' to be a 'deep leverage point for sustainability transformation', using Meadows' explication of shallow and deep leverage points to effect change in systems. There are strong critics of this 'connection to nature' diagnosis for the ecological challenges facing global society (Fletcher, 2017, Dickinson, 2013, Morton, 2017). The many strong advocates of the idea, however, have given it salience in the popular imagination. Is this framing of human-nonhuman relationships as 'needing to be reconnected' useful for a story of coexistence?

3.2.3 Agriculture & Conservation

With this thesis I hope to highlight the benefits of moving beyond silos of scientific disciplines to emphasise the relevance of this work more broadly. There are many areas where the consequences of thinking and doing human-nonhuman relationships in certain ways are apparent. For example, the interplay between agriculture and environmental conservation is an often contested physical and intellectual landscape which reflects paradigms in how the human-nonhuman relationship is conceptualised; and both sides are at a fault of compartmentalising responses, biologically and politically (Stuart 2014).

Stuart (2014) demonstrates in detail that the goals of both environmentalists and agriculturalists require the retention of farmland: both for the production of food and fibre and for the maintenance of ecological function and ecosystem services. Although reserving land

'undisturbed by humans' is important for conserving elements of biodiversity, this will not be sufficient to achieve ecological restoration by restoring trophic cascades (Boitani & Linnell, 2015), nor address the productivist needs of human societies (Dryzek, 1982). The success of large carnivore conservation will rely on understanding the importance of both large, protected areas and 'favourable surrounding matrices' (Kremen, 2015: 52), and appreciating the ability of large carnivores to live in human-dominated landscapes (Chapron et al., 2014; López-Bao, Kaczensky, Linnell, Boitani, & Chapron, 2015).

Chapter 5 will go into more detail on these 'Stories of Conservation', so I will just highlight here two of the hegemonies of ideas inherent to some of these approaches. The concept of 'biodiversity' is itself a powerful tool in driving conservation science and practice (Bartling, 2016). Similarly, the concept of 'restoration' assumes a relatively static target, one based on potentially incomplete knowledge of the past, and assumptions about what is needed, desirable or practicable in the future. Monbiot (2013) discusses this as a 'shifting baseline syndrome' – that is, ideas of what an area should be like shift depending on what defaults or 'baselines' people adhere to.

I have avoided situating this thesis within any single one of these approaches, as I am more interested in the ideas underneath all of them; that is, I'm interested in examining the cognitive, affective, ontological, epistemological, and ethical perspectives through which we understand human-nonhuman relationships generally, and through which a construction of coexistence might be more thoroughly articulated. To do this, to contextualise my offerings here, I do need to cover some ground in terms of the historical debates over morality in human-nonhuman relationships. Thus, next I will step through some of the relevant philosophical examinations of environmental ethics and our ecology as humans.

3.3 Environmental Ethics & Human Ecology

Throughout human history, humans have developed several frameworks to support us to make better moral and ethical choices and decisions. These frameworks are decision-support tools, and they are supposed to tell us how to know what is 'good', and what is 'right', and to whom consideration of 'right' and 'good' should apply. Many of these frameworks are inherently anthropocentric because they rest on the premise of a human valuer. However, recent philosophical developments (in the last 60 or so years), recognising the significance of the ecological challenges facing humanity, have sought to rearticulate moral frameworks to account for nonhuman nature. The label of 'environmental ethics' has been used to loosely group these frameworks.

Environmental ethics have been characterised as 'biocentric' vs 'ecocentric' (Bartling, 2016); through rights discourses (Singer, 1977); via holistic concerns (e.g., deep ecology) (Mathews, 1995; Naess, 1973); or in the language of value as 'instrumental' vs 'intrinsic' (Batavia

& Nelson, 2017; Vucetich, Bruskotter, & Nelson, 2015). Hegemonies are created through these characterisations, for example of 'endangered species' or of 'biodiversity' (Bartling, 2016; Lorimer, 2015). Such hegemonies become taken-for-granted stories, forming foundations for relationships of power, and can create fixed and abstracted goals for conservation action (Bscher, Sullivan, Neves, Igoe, & Brockington, 2012; Fletcher, 2017; Fredriksen, 2016).

Sylvan and Bennett (1994) present an analysis of these distinctions in their book *The Greening of Ethics*, working on articulating what makes an ethics properly 'green', or environmental. In discussing definitions of ethics, Sylvan and Bennet (1994: p. 18). offer this:

> *An environmental ethics is an ethics, as defined, which among other concerns, take specific account, through its values and principles, of (significant) environmental items, of parts of non-human nature. But it [this explication] too leaves much to be explained. How the nonhuman world is made the object of concern, how it is moral concern, what forms of moral concern are applicable to what elements of the environment, and how to achieve the aim of acting appropriately – all are matters that make an environmental ethics one of the most controversial areas of philosophy and also one of the most exciting …*

Published now almost 30 years ago, one could be forgiven for assuming that these questions had been resolved. Rather, variations in the answers to these questions are arguably the basis for human-human conflict over what 'ought' to be the right moral relationship between humans and nonhumans. These questions are more relevant than ever.

*

In their refutation of the inevitability of human chauvinism Routley & Routley (1995) put forward that categorisation is a fundamental part of ethics in many of its theorisations; and that the basis of ethics is the combination of moral considerability of different components, and their moral significance. Instrumental and intrinsic theories of value and morality are thus based on morally considerable classes/groups/kinds, thereby allowing discrimination and inferior treatment of items outside the class deemed worthy of moral consideration.

Within these distinctions in the environmental ethics space are those seeking to extend the sphere of moral consider-ability by grouping things/beings into categories or kinds based on morally significant characteristics: e.g., sentience, language, the ability to suffer. Axiological or deontological frameworks derive moral considerability and significance based on individual rights and responsibilities (Mathews, 2012). Alternatively, other ethical frameworks seek to extend the boundaries of moral concern based on holistic considerations, arguing, for example, that an ecosystem, biosphere, or even a universe is a morally considerable unit (Bartling, 2016; Naess, 1973). The space between these two has been blended by recent attempts to extend personhood, and thus rights, to ecosystems via legal mechanisms. This necessitates stretching the concept of a 'being' to include, and thus attribute personhood to, for example, a river (Hsiao, 2012; Hutchison, 2014) or a landscape (Gordon, 2018). This is similar to how corporations are treated, so there is conceptual precedence.

Whatever their differences however, these two approaches both depend on categorisation, and on the 'properties' assumed/given/understood to be held by the being in question, whether that is a lion or a landscape. It is through the holding of these properties that a moral obligation is engendered. In *Animals: A History,* editors Adamson and Edwards (2018) note two key questions as relevant to all the philosophical reflection on animals they considered: what capacities can be ascribed to animals? And how should we treat them? The phrasing of these questions reflects the same substantive perspective on the nonhuman 'entities' and their 'consideration'.

The 'Relational Turn' in philosophy and ethics is a recent name given to the theoretical move away from this focus on properties of entities to focus on the *relationship* as the originator of moral concern and ethical obligation (Dépelteau, 2013). Such an act involves consideration of questions such as: 'what are the conditions under which an entity becomes a moral subject?' (Coeckelbergh & Gunkel, 2014). This question better addresses the prevalent contradictions and inconsistencies present in how we actually do morality and ethics day-to-day.

This 'relational turn' builds from the work of continental philosophers, including Levinas, Heidegger, and Derrida. This thesis takes as its starting point the interpretation and development of their work through the relational theories of, particularly, Haraway (2008, 2016), Kohn (2013), and Barad (2007). Of these, Haraway especially is not without her critics (see e.g., Giraud, 2019; Kompatsiaris, 2022; Lewis, 2017; Weisberg, 2009), so I intend to specifically connect her ideas of relationality (introduced later in this Chapter) to the work in theorising ethical concern of Sylvan and Bennett (1994), and Routley and Routley (1980, 1995), under discussion here. To return to that discussion….

Sylvan and Bennett (1994: p. 19) argue against a superficial or 'shallow' definition of environmental ethics, one which is concerned with parts of the environment, and which acts as an extension of standard ethics to morally considerable parts of the environment, and as such:

> *need not say anything particularly positive or sympathetic about environments; indeed, productions on the topic may try to dismiss or defeat environmental causes and to defuse or dissolve environmental problems, for instance as not worth bothering about*

Similarly, in differentiating their deep-green theory in this way from other ecocentric ethical frameworks such as Deep Ecology, Sylvan and Bennett are specifically theorizing an ethical perspective that is neither partist nor holist. They describe the possibility of contentment as a pursuit of satisfaction, or 'satisizing', rather than the pursuit of maximization, or maximizing (see Vignette 2: Experiential education and Sustainability below for how this concept was applied and lived at Mission: Wolf). They apply this especially in the sense of value and in personal and psychological areas as well as in material or economic ones. They argue that most pursuits that claim to be environmental recognise limits in the realm of resource use but reinforce principles of maximization in other personal and psychological realms: the maximization of self-realization, the maximization of value, the maximization of ecospheric utility. This is an attribution that I

would, for example, lay on the pursuit of 'sustainability.' As Sylvan and Bennett (1994: p. 155-6) explain:

> *According to deep-green theory, there is no obligation or rational directive to maximize value, still less its putative or degenerate representatives. Yet maximizing value, at least, is the very point which most theories, including Deep Ecology, champion. [Deep Green Theory] is very different as regards maximization of economic impacts and performance indicators such as gross product and throughput, and human population and consumption*

To cement these distinctions, Sylvan and Bennett draw on earlier work by Sylvan (as Routley), and Plumwood (as Routley). I introduced this no-reduction position earlier, in Chapter 2, in reference to Midgley's Systemic Intervention. I return to it here to deepen the connection between my research design and the theoretical extension of this project. Routley and Routley (1980: p. 319) describe an 'ecological outlook' as a no-reduction position:

> *The no-reduction position can provide a suitable metaphysical base for an ecological outlook or worldview, in which man is seen as part of a natural community, part of natural systems seen as integrated wholes and with welfare and interests bound up with the whole, and not as, in the typical Western view, a separate, self-contained actor, standing outside the system and manipulating it in the pursuit of self-contained interests…*
>
> *The no-reduction position can thus provide a natural foundation for a genuinely environmental ethic, one which allows human actions to be guided by respect, care and concern for the natural world and rejects the 'Human Egoist' thesis that the only constraints on human action concerning nature arise from the interests of other humans.*

Accounting in morally justifiable ways for both parts and wholes is one of the ongoing challenges of living in a complex multispecies world. The inherent commitment to maximizing value in all other ethical perspectives is one of the reasons Sylvan and Bennett argue that the expansion of the sphere of moral concern, based on the holding of ethically significant properties (however defined), and the application of standard ethics to environmental issues, is not sufficient for a truly *environmental* ethics. According to them, a truly environmental ethic must be both i) ethically green, that is, geared towards and causing improvement to significant environmental concerns; and ii) ecologically rational, that is, operating such that the protective, waste assimilative, *and* productive aspects of humans in nature are rational (Dryzek, 1982; Sylvan & Bennett, 1994). Sylvan and Bennet are unconvinced that expanding the sphere of moral concern will achieve this.

This is a challenge to a concept of coexistence reliant on the moral considerability of a select group of properties. If the various common rationales given for extending moral consideration to other beings do not apply, how does this affect our biopolitical decision-making? These rationales include, for example, the work of Peter Singer (1977) around suffering and sentience; the work of Deep Ecologists like Arne Naess (1973); the ecofeminisms of Val Plumwood (1993), Debra Bird-Rose (2011), and Freya Matthews (Mathews, 1995, 2014); the moral responsibility of

Emmanuel Levinas (1980, 1981), or more recently attempts to motivate 'care' around 'intrinsic value' (Batavia & Nelson, 2017; Lute et al., 2016; Vucetich et al., 2015). What are the consequences of the limitations we place on the extension of 'moral significance' to others, by whatever rationale?

Vignette 2: Experiential education and Sustainability

> *Experiential education, for Mission Wolf, was about more than just being allowed into the enclosure and given the chance to touch a wolf. It meant the chance of being involved in every aspect of what it took to keep that wolf happy in its cage. To feed it. To build its enclosure well so it was safe and secure.to learn how to now scare the wolves by learning about body language, communication, and intention.*
>
> *But even beyond those immediate and personal levels, to learn about and participate in what was involved in living a sustainable life, such that these wolves' cousins in the wild might still have a place, a wilderness, to call home. And this was not just about recycling or avoiding plastic, though they are important. It went deeper than that.*
>
> *It was about questioning your entitlement to comfort and cleanliness and convenience. Comfort as in the creature comforts of a guaranteed warm bed and full belly. Cleanliness as in the assumed access to fresh hot water and a place to wash. Convenience as in the ability to jump in the car and transport yourself where you want to be; to eat whatever morsel you so desired, rather than what could be grown at your feet. To experience satisfaction, rather than maximization.*

Routley and Routley (1995), challenged this substantive approach, and showed that the logic of classifying moral consider-ability is flawed. Firstly, selection into the 'Moral Club' cannot be defensibly based on definitional grounds (i.e., definitions of morality and value) because those definitions are not morally defensible, they are arbitrary and self-validating. Furthermore, moral treatment cannot be based on characteristics of certain groups unless a) all in that group (i.e., humans) share the characteristic; b) those characteristics cannot be possessed by any nonhuman and c) the selected characteristics are both morally relevant and sufficient to justify the limit of moral consider-ability at just the right point. Attempts to circumvent these issues of logic can be seen in the extension of rights to nonhumans, and in the extension of personhood. That is, the arbitrary and indefensible line is just drawn somewhere else.

Routley and Routley (1995: p.125) further address the issue of the 'valuer' in understanding moral obligation. That is, if value is understood to only exist from the perspective of a valuer, and that valuer can only be human, then nonhuman life cannot inherently generate moral obligation, because the human is free to choose whether or not to value (and thus be morally obliged to) the nonhuman being.

> *…moral obligations do not require morally equal, free, and responsible contracting parties, in the way that a social contract account presupposes. Worse, the argument would appear, with but little adaptation, to justify the practices of such groups as death squads, multinational corporations, and the Mafia, or any other group that contracts to protect the interest of its own members…*

> *If these unacceptable conclusions are to be avoided, all humans will have to be somehow, in virtue of simply being human, subject to some mysterious, fictional, social contract which they did not freely choose to enter into, cannot get out of, and which can never exclude any member of the human species. So, the unacceptable consequences are avoided only if crucial features of the notion of contract such as freedom and responsibility are dropped, and the notion of contract and premise so seriously weakened as to become virtually without conditions. For the argument to work, the residue has to be mere common humanity, and the 'contract' little more than the convention of morally considering just other member of the human species. Such a convention differs little, however, from a restatement of human chauvinism; the preferred explanation is really no explanation, for such convention can neither justify human chauvinism, nor, since different conventions could be arranged, explain why it is inevitable.*

My take-away from Routley and Routley's point here is that the presumption of a human moral valuer is unnecessary; that such a premise of moral considerability rests on flawed and unjustifiable categorical notions.

This question of value and the valuer connects to Soper's (1995: p. 255) discussion of *Humans vs Nature:*

> *…there is a pervasive inclination to point to humanly admired qualities - its diversity, richness, autonomy, and beauty, for example - as those that endow it with 'intrinsic' value. Yet why invoke the qualities of nature at all, let alone these positive ones, unless to invite appraisal of it on a scale of human values? If nature does genuinely have value independently of human estimation of it, then, strictly speaking, we cannot know what it is, nor, a fortiori, applaud or condemn it and should refrain from pronouncing on its qualities.*

I am now left with the question: if we, as humans, cannot know, applaud, or condemn a being based on its qualities or properties, then wherefrom our moral obligation to other beings?

Routley and Routley (1995: p.126) do argue, however, that it is possible to weigh and distinguish moral obligations:

> *Distinctions between the moral constraints appropriate to different types of items can be recognized without leading back to human chauvinism. The point is an important one since many objections to allowing moral obligations to extend beyond the sphere of humans, or in some cases the sphere of sentient creatures, depend on ignoring such distinctions, on assuming that it is a question of transferring the full set of rights and obligations appropriate to intelligent social creatures to such items as trees and rivers – that the alternative to chauvinism is therefore an irrational and mystical animism concerning nature*

By painting the extension of rights and obligations to nonhumans as an all-or-nothing situation, any alternatives to anthropocentric moral systems can be dismissed as irrational. Routley and Routley's (1980) 'no-reduction position' walks a middle ground, and acknowledges the relational continuity between all life, whilst still recognising difference and distinctions along the way.

Routley and Routley do not accept that it is morally justifiable to separate out humans from other beings for the purposes of moral consideration and decision-making. Acknowledging the

relational continuity between all life means there are no easy ‘outs’, no default answers that allow for the assumption (or not) of moral considerability. If there are no ‘all-or-nothing’ reasons to ‘extend’ moral concern, what we are left with is an obligation to consider each being *in context* and *in relationship*.

*

To round out this discussion of environmental ethics, I need to now articulate the grounding of this thesis in Human Ecology, before going on to articulate the orienting concepts I have found useful to address the question of moral relationships between humans and nonhumans. Human Ecology is useful as a lens through which to examine the stories we tell ourselves about what is happening and why, and what is a worthwhile concept of ‘improvement’. Human Ecology specifically invites one to use philosophical thinking to explore material and moral relationships between humans and nonhumans (Boyden & Bontes, 1992), making it an essentially phronetic consideration.

Human Ecology is a perspective that appreciates the entanglement of worldviews, facts, values, ethics, theory, and practice that characterise the ecological challenges currently facing human society, such as those around resource access and use, and human-nonhuman relations. Furthermore, Human Ecology is ‘integrative of necessity’ (Robin & Boyden, 2018), and its practitioners are committed to going beyond disciplinary boundaries and concerns, and accounting for the material and biophysical connections that frame human social arrangements:

> *Without that conceptual cohesion, human ecology inherits the many, sometimes 'irreconcilable approaches according to their assumptions about nature and about what counts as knowledge' that are found in ecology. … More than just studying nature and humans, human ecology extended science beyond the other-than-human world. And reminded humans of their own 'bio-history' and profound dependence on the physical world and other life forms for survival (Robin & Boyden, 2018: 146)*

Boyden’s concept of biohistory, introduced here, is a way of understanding the interplay of culture, story, and biology throughout human evolution. It forms a core part of my Chapter 4.

Human Ecology can thus be understood to both hold an appreciation of physical realities and be an essentially philosophical activity (Christensen, 2014). As such, it is a useful lens through which to consider human-nature coexistence for a worthwhile future. That is, a human-ecological interest is not simply an interest in 'listing' whether the human-environment interaction is practically unsustainable, prudentially unwise, and/or morally wrong; rather, human ecology seeks to explore the practical and the ethical as inseparably bound, and together as detracting from 'living well' (Christensen, 2014). According to Christensen, justice is a constituent component of being human, a defining attribute of humanity. Therefore, injustice is fundamentally dehumanizing. This inherently requires an examination of human desires that preconfigure ideas of 'living well': if, to be fulfilled, those desires require injustice, then human ecology is committed to the possibility of radically reconfiguring those desires to make them just, and thus conducive to ‘living well.’ Christensen takes human ‘happiness’ to be equal to ‘contentment,’ and thus

points to the worth of constraining oneself for the sake of a morally considerable other. Christensen's concept of 'living well' is thus here taken to be relevant to a construction of coexistence that is practical, useful, and philosophically grounded.

I am specifically aiming here to connect older theories of environmental ethics, such as Sylvan & Bennett's (1994) *Deep Green Theory* and Routley & Routley's (1980) 'ecological outlook', to these more recent theories in Human Ecology, as both hold a clear appreciation of limits to not only technology and power, but also to rationality, knowledge, and even self-realization. This grounding in historical debates over morality in human-nonhuman relationships is important to contextualise my discussion from this point on because I now want to connect to a core them of this thesis, which is the role of categorisation in relation to environmental ethics. Categorisation plays an essential role in human ethical frameworks. Deeper than the words chosen to represent the values or perspectives is the role of categorisation in the theorisation (and doing) of ethical commitments and obligations. This human-ecological perspective will be extended in Chapter 4 through a discussion of Boyden's biohistorical narrative and the concept of 'biosensitivity' (Boyden, 2016a, 2016b), and through a consideration of Levinas' (1981) theorization of significant otherness.

3.4 Theoretical Orienting Concepts

With this background in a wider, diverse literature, and grounding in historical debates over human-nonhuman moral relationships, I now want to articulate the theoretical concepts I have found useful to construct my concept of coexistence. I will:

- articulate my use of theories of categorisation (Bowker & Star, 1999; Lakoff, 1987);
- introduce and explain Haraway's (2008), concepts of companion species, encounter, 'encounter value', and 'response-ability';
- explain biopolitics as the framing through which process of categorisation, and ideas and stories of relationship are performed and have consequences; and
- connect these to the concept of relationality and the 'relational turn' in philosophy, metaphysics, and ethics (Coeckelbergh & Gunkel, 2014; Dowling, Lloyd, & Suchet-Pearson, 2017; Yunkaporta, 2019)

3.4.1 Categorisation

Humans relate to the world in dynamic ways. However, we often interpret and understand these relationships categorically. That is, cognitively, we tend to categorise things into 'kinds', and then understand them in terms of the features of those categories: what they have in common (Lakoff, 1987). We also categorise things based on what we *think* they have in common, and who is doing the thinking (Lakoff, 1987). Furthermore, we do not just categorise object or things, we also categorise abstract entities: experiences, emotions, institutions, and relationships. These

heuristics of categorisation are essential to our continued ability to function cognitively: without them, we would be overwhelmed by information. Categories enable us to filter the world and make judgements and decisions. Any time we apply reason, we are employing categories; and most categorisation is automatic and unconscious (Lakoff, 1987). We only become aware of this categorical work that we are doing when it becomes problematic (i.e., when something doesn't fit neatly or resists our categorisation, or the consequences are unexpected).

Categories are the building blocks with which we understand what the world *is*: this is how they are ontological. But further than that, we use them to tell ourselves stories about our place in the world, and they in turn give form to our relationships with other things, people, and animals. Categories are part of how we function not just as humans but also as a society. Categories become naturalised by individuals and within communities of practice: they become 'taken for granted' by the group that subscribes to and uses them, and they give form to the boundaries between groups or communities of practices (Bowker & Star, 1999). These naturalised categories are thus 'boundary infrastructures': they are part of the fabric that connects individual and social praxis (Bowker & Star, 1999). Choosing the appropriate categories to which to subscribe (to take for granted, to naturalise, to identify with) is a *performative* action: we are *doing* something, and we do it constantly. It is a construction that is made and remade every day; and it reflects our individual cognition and social identity.

Bowker and Star (1999: p. 287) emphasise the inextricable relationship between our ontological categorisation of reality and the material consequence on that reality of enacting such conceptual distinctions. Furthermore, they note that:

> *…Categories are historically situated artifacts, and, like all artifacts, are learned as part of membership in communities of practice…. Classifications as technologies are powerful artifacts that may link thousands of communities and span highly complex boundaries.*

An example of this ontological categorisation can be seen in the ways that living things are categorised into species. A salient definition of a species is a 'natural kind[s] defined by common essential properties' (Lakoff, 1987: p. 9). These species distinctions are used to inform conservation responses, policy interventions and legislation, for example, in Endangered Species Acts or related legislation. However, as evolutionary theory has developed, the lines between species are not so clearly delineated, nor are such static definitions useful for adapting conservation science and practice to a changing climate (Braverman, 2015; Fredriksen, 2016).

In endeavouring towards fulfilling the aims of this thesis, I have found it useful to consider the unconscious nature of cognitive process of categorisation, as well as the personal, institutional, social, and material consequences of performing these categorisations in shared language. To me, the performance of ontological categories can be understood as underpinning values, attitudes, and behaviours. Furthermore, disrupting these cognitive categorisation can be deeply disturbing: multiplicity or heterogeneity can be perceived as troubling or duplicitous, and 'people often

cannot see what they take for granted until they meet someone who doesn't take it for granted' (Bowker and Star, 1999: p. 291).

Processes of categorisation are a prevalent and powerful component of the thinking and the doing of human-nonhuman relationships. These theories of categorisation will be expanded on in Chapters 4 and 5. In Chapter 4 I discuss the role of categorisation in how we understand the characters in the story of relationship – the entities between which relationship exists. In Chapter 5, I use the case of carnivore conservation to examine the categories we perform as the paradigm through which we understand 'the way the world works' – in this case, how carnivores 'work' – and through which we understand the system of interest and our interventions in it. This is important for a construction of coexistence because understanding the ways the categories form the building blocks of relationships affects how we understand those relationships themselves.

Box 1 below demonstrates some examples of how this played out during the education programs at Mission: Wolf

Box 1: Wolf/Dog Categorisation

I think the most important part about what we do is trying to get people to leave here with a more connected sense of what a wolf is. In terms of trying to dig through the muck of what we've created, as far as ideas about "they're spiritual totem animal of nature" or "they're gonna eat your grandma" and … "Blow down your house" or whatever. Trying to get people to connect to the idea of what it means to just be a wild animal doing your wild animal thing and not proscribing all this other stuff to it – Sophie, M:W Volunteer

But when you're in their zone they're trying to say hello to you, but then they're completely independent. I mean it's the exact opposite of the dog. They have zero interest in pleasing you – M:W Visitor

And they're so different than dogs. Dogs were like "Oh man!", I mean most the time they'll want to play or something like that. But the wolves either check you out... Maybe they'll come and investigate more or they'll run away... of just, not even run, just saunter away and do their own thing – M:W Visitor

Also, just wolves in general if you try to… say anything concrete about them, odds are one of them will prove you wrong in some way. You can't make any assumptions – Lauren, M:W Volunteer

3.4.2 Companion Species

Haraway uses the phrase, 'companion species' to capture a sense of the agency, cocreation, negotiation and participation involved in interspecies relating. She introduces the concept within a discussion of categorisation, as in, how we categorise others, especially nonhuman others, and our relationships. She is also interested in what this means for moral obligation:

> *Trafficking in category making and unmaking, the play between kin and kind is essential to the figure of companion species. What is the cost of kinship, of category making and unmaking, and for whom? The content of any obligation is dependent on the thick and dynamic particularities of relationship-in-progress, that is, of kin and kind. The common matrix for these diverse claims on us is an ethics of flourishing (Haraway, 2008: p.134)*

Haraway (2008: p.208) notes that her use in scholarship of the personal pronoun "who" in reference to nonhuman lives refers not to the 'derivative, Western, ethnocentric, humanist personhood for either people or animals'. Rather, Haraway argues, there is a more important query if we are to seriously consider our relationships with nonhuman others, 'companion species' as she refers to the beings we continually coexist with (and a concept carefully distinct from companion animals). Haraway is asking us to consider the possibility that we co-create ourselves and 'Others' through relationship: aka, we are beings-in-relationship. We construct our self in response to others, in constant negotiation with our perception of how others' experience of us.

I pick up on Haraway's use of this phrase 'companion species' because I like the way it forces me to think beyond my assumptions about who and what I am interacting with, and what it means to 'care' about or for 'others'.

Haraway goes on to articulate the concepts of 'encounter value' in connection with the idea of 'companion species': I see this as part of the encounter that Mission: Wolf is offering: the framing of the experiencing is focused on presenting the wolf as an experiencing subject with preferences and agency that must be considered in the aspiration towards an ethics of flourishing.

3.4.3 Encounter and 'Encounter value'

> *Marx always understood that use and exchange value were names for relationships; that was precisely the insight that led beneath the layer of appearance of market equivalences into the messy domain of extraction, accumulation, and human exploitation.*
>
> *Donna Haraway, 2008, When Species Meet, p.45*

Haraway (2008) uses the concepts of 'contact zones' and 'encounter value' to think about human-nature relationships. Her premise is that 'accountability, caring for, being affected, and entering into responsibility are not ethical abstractions', they are created and shaped by 'touch, regard, looking back, becoming with' (Haraway, 2008: p. 25-6). When we come in 'contact' - physically through touch, and metaphysically through regard - we are each changed through the experience of that contact, we are peppering each other with 'attachment sites for world making', and these 'make us responsible in unpredictable ways for which worlds take shape' (Haraway, 2008: p. 26).

Touch and regard are parts of how we build relationships and learn to greet and respond to each other. For Mission: Wolf, creating opportunities for both physical touch *and* metaphysical regard was a cornerstone of their mission to engender understanding and 'care'.

Does it matter that touch was a significant component of the education program at Mission: Wolf? They seemed to think it was. Over the course of their 30 years' operating, both as a traveling wolf education program and as a nature centre and refuge, they retained, and reinforced, a belief that humans needed to touch to understand. And, they thought, everyone can't go to Yellowstone and touch a wolf. They saw that as their purpose. Take these wolves that didn't mind meeting new people, allow those wolves to become teachers, let people learn how to touch them, and they will have a purpose.

The only reason to have a wolf in a cage, is to teach people that wolves shouldn't be in cages. And to have a sanctuary that truly provided refuge to the so many animals who were scared of people, to allow them peace and free expression of their species-being, was made possible by allowing those few that were brave enough to greet visitors, that were, in fact, enriched by those opportunities, to be the ones that provided that education (see Box 2 and Vignette 3 below).

Box 2: Encounter

Have you ever seen what a room of 500 kids do when you walk a wolf in the room? You ever tried to get 500 kids quiet? It don't work. And of course, the wolf makes them quiet. Not only that, they'll sit quiet for 30 minutes. But then we find that these are kids that have never seen nature, and that they've never sat this quiet because they've not been around nature enough. That's the thing that is so fascinating, years later now, that I've learned how to read the wolves well enough to bring handicap, autistic, impaired non-focused humans in with the Wolf… is that I don't care if you're four-years-old, 90-years-old, autistic, incredibly intelligent: When that wolf rocks in your presence, everyone takes a minute to focus. They shut up. They become self-aware. And when the animal looks at them - they know that that thing is scanning them. And we've watched kids that normally have outbursts every 90 seconds sit still for 30 minutes. We've watched young kids, I've watched gang members, I've watched policemen, I've watched politicians. Hostile, pissed-off ranchers that normally would just want to shoot the Wolf, and they actually shut up and sat still the entire time the wolf was in the room.

Part of it is fear-based, but at the end of it, you know, as one rancher said, "that animal looked at me and it contemplated who I was - that is an intelligent animal". And of course other people said "it interrogated me", "it read my mind", "it scanned me". One kid felt violated by it because it understood who he was and he didn't want anyone to know who he was – Kent, M:W Director

*

Haraway further makes clear that we are not so distinct from the other lives around us as we often imagine ourselves to be. She claims we are always 'enmeshed in hermeneutic labour (and play)' (2008, pp.262-3); and she uses the term companion species to articulate a 'permanently undecidable category … that insists on the relation as the smallest unit of being and of analysis'. (2008, pp.164-5). That is, to exist together as we do entails iterations of connection, communication, and interpretation, on both sides. Haraway emphasises the meeting - the encounter at the contact zone - as a locus of this value: 'Meetings make us who and what we are in the avid contact zones that are the world. Once 'we' have met, we can never be 'the same'

again' (2008, pp.287). Haraway is clear that she appreciates the subjectivity of all beings involved in this 'we' (2008, p.46):

> *Trans-species encounter value is about relationships among a motley array of lively beings, in which commerce and consciousness, evolution and bioengineering, and ethics and utilities are all in play. I am especially interested here in "encounters" that involve, in a nontrivial but hard-to-characterize way, subjects, of different biological species*

Haraway is arguing that just as 'Marx understood the analysis of the commodity form into exchange value and use value to be a practice crucial to freedom projects' (2008, p.65), *encounter value* can be a useful analytic lens through which to re-examine exploitation, freedom, and coexistence. Considering the relationship itself - the dynamic, two-way, participatory, and ongoing engagement between living selves - can offer a fruitful ingress to reflect on our story of who we think we are, why we do what we do, and what that means for freedom, exploitation, and coexistence. For Foucault, freedom is a practice, not a result or a state of affairs (Blaikie, 1993). For Haraway, 'the question between animals and humans here is, Who are you? and so, Who are we?' (Haraway, 2008, p. 208).

Haraway is calling for a recognition of the subjectivity and experience of other beings and lives, and an acknowledgement that the encounter between two beings is an occurrence imbued with value, capable of being done well or badly, and worthy of thorough analysis. Such recognition can reframe our understanding and experience of human-nature relationships, the stories we tell ourselves about those relationship, and potentially, the moral and material consequences of those stories.

*

Vignette 3: My encounters at Mission: Wolf

Mission: Wolf has built their whole education program on the importance of the encounter. They think that giving people the chance to meet the wolves is going to be far more powerful than anything else in getting people on the wolves' side.

I was fascinated to explore why.

My first encounter with a wolf happened on a blustery afternoon. The Wet Mountains of Colorado that year held true to their name, and almost every afternoon the tension and pressure in the air would build, until a squall would blow through and drop buckets of water over everything. Ten minutes later, it would be sunny and still again. This drenching brought well needed relief to hot canines built for colder climes.

Wolves in summer are scraggly. Bedraggled. Tufts of undercoat fur slough off them constantly in late spring, and their bony, scrawny frames are exposed, making obvious the elbows that touch as they stand sentinel looking out over the mountains.

But the people running Mission: Wolf are not daft. They don't let just anyone walk into an enclosure with any old wolf. They've learnt over many years, with many wolves and many people, that a few simple things work best.

First, give the people some idea of what to expect.

"The wolf probably won't come up to you, and if they do, they probably won't want to hang around for long."

Then, teach them appropriate ways to behave. Teach them how to talk wolf, basically.

"How do you think wolves say hello? Do they shake paws? No probably not, right. What they do, is sniff noses. So, when you go in, we want you to be prepared to 'shake hands' their way: show them your teeth and look them in the eye. If you close your lips and eyes, and pull your face away, it would be like if I slapped your hand in a handshake. It's a bit rude, right? Well, they'll just keep trying if you're rude to them. And Magpie might crawl in your lap, and encourage you to give a proper greeting by nibbling on your lips just a little bit… But you know what? As soon as you open your eyes, and show her your teeth, her ears will go down, her tail will wag, and she'll think "oh, ok! You like me!", and she'll move on.

Teach them what the consequences of their behaviour might be; show that we don't control these animals. That they're not automata.

Teach them how to negotiate meaning with a wolf.

Teach them to allow the wolf to do what it wants to do.

Teach them how to be polite, in wolf.

*

I walked into the enclosure behind a few of the other staff. Quietly, with our eyes carefully upraised. Not making eye contact, not offering an invitation. Yet.

Once seated on the wooden logs at the top of the enclosure, however… once seated at their eye level… that was the time to reach out. To cajole. To invite. To offer greeting.

That was the chance to look the wolf in the eye and see it making up its mind about whether or not to take up the offer.

And then suddenly I had all three wolves in my lap. Abraham, the gregarious adult male, rescued as a pup from a Salt Lake City animal shelter, thrusts his nose in first. His tail is wagging as he plants his forefeet on my thigh and stretches his nose forward to smell my breath/lips/teeth. Magpie, the grizzled old grey female pushes him out of the way and proceeds to offer her own greeting - a thorough face-scrubbing from a long rough tongue. I remember to keep my lips open, but my teeth clenched closed, lest her enthusiastic tongue gain unnecessary entry. The final greeting is offered by the youngest in this pack - the two-year-old black wolf Zeab. He is much shyer than the other two, less experienced as he is to this scenario. But he doesn't want to be left out. He wriggles in sideways between Abraham and I, leaning his huge head down over my shoulder and pushing his nose into the fray. I reach up under his enormous chin and stroke the thick fur of his neck ruff.

And just like that, it's over. The three wolves move on to another visitor, carefully approaching this new stranger, and then 'shaking hands' as they go.

Eye contact was such a crucial part of how Mission Wolf was able to do what it did, was able to offer people and wolves a chance at these greetings, at these encounters. At building, through touch, these attachment sites for world-making; for regard.

3.4.4 Response-ability

Haraway (2008) says that when we encounter other beings, in the contact zone, we *respond*. And this capacity (or ability) to respond – to be response-able – is built through encountering and relating.

Haraway thus introduces here concept of 'response-ability' through a discussion of our ability to access the experience of others. Noting our incapacity to literally crawl into the heads of others, she denies the step that commonly follows such assertions. Just because we cannot literally know the experience of an Other does not allow us to deny that that experience exists: the philosophical and literary conceit that all we have are representations and no access to what animals think and feel is wrong (Haraway, 2008: p. 226).

Given that literal knowledge isn't possible, what then allows us access to the experience of others? This is the role of communication – and communication is a skill. Haraway continues:

> *To claim not to be able to communicate with and to know one another and other critters, however imperfectly, is a denial of moral entanglements (the open) for which we are responsible and in which we respond. Technique, calculation, method - all are indispensable and exacting. But they are not response, which is irreducible to calculation. Response is comprehending that subject-making connection is real. Response is face-to-face in the contact zone of an entangled relationship. Response is in the open. Companion species know this (Haraway, 2008: pp. 226-7)*

To illustrate this point, Haraway relays the work of primatologist Barbara Smuts and her reflections on the practices that reveal the participation and meaning-making involved in the encounter between experiencing beings. Smuts, in interacting with bonobos, had to learn how to communicate with them on their level, such that they accepted her presence - not as an interloper, but within their social semiotic world - their world of meaning-making. Smuts had to learn how to move, be, and act such that the bonobos responded, and could understand her responses. That is, she had to create relationship.

> *The result was that the bonobos treated her more and more as a reliable social being who would move away when told to do so and around whom it might be safe to carry on monkey life without a lot of fuss over her presence. (Haraway, 2008: p. 25).*

The importance of creating relationship through appreciating the perspective of another, finding shared 'language' (i.e., meaning), and responding appropriately… is not news. What makes this meaningful is the recognition that nonhuman other beings are capable of such meaning making, communication, and response.

Haraway then draws the connection between response, regard, and communication. Quoting Smuts and explaining the idea of greeting practices between beings:

> *Smuts defines a greeting ritual as a kind of embodied communication…more like a dance than a word… The flow of entangled meaningful bodies in time….is communication about relationship, the relationship itself, and the means for reshaping relationship and so it's enactors…*

> … "changes in greetings are a change in the relationship". [Smuts] goes further: "With language, it is possible to lie and say we like someone when we don't. However, if the above speculations are correct, closely interacting bodies tend to tell the truth (Haraway, 2008: p. 26)

For Haraway, this embodied communication is not just about the two particular interacting beings. Considering the greeting and encounter between beings is rich ground for thinking about regard, response, and respect more generally:

> …… The truth or honesty of non-linguistic embodied communication depends on looking back and greeting significant others, again and again. This sort of truth or honesty is not some trope-free, fantastic kind of natural authenticity that only animals can have while humans are defined by the happy fault of lying denotatively and knowing it. Rather, this truth telling is about co-constitutive naturalcultural dancing, holding in esteem, and regard open to those who look back reciprocally. Always tripping, this kind of truth has a multispecies future (Haraway, 2008: p. 26-27)

I elaborate in Chapter 4 on the concept of significant otherness that Haraway touches on here. For now, it is enough to note the connections between encounter, greeting, and response-ability.

To discuss anything moral, of course, is to make a claim to the 'good'. Haraway is offering here, through this concept of response-ability, an attempt to rethink moral obligation and concern in a way alternative to impartial utilitarian ethics. By drawing attention to the iterative and co-created nature of human-nonhuman relations, Haraway is identifying the primacy of negotiation (through response) to any moral framework that adequately accounts for otherness and nonhuman life. By accepting that both parties are able to respond is to recognise the agency and participation of both parties in the relationship. Such a recognition would of course include recognising the possibility of oneself as becoming another beings' lunch: a possibility that humans have largely become adept at ignoring (unless you count the banquet we regularly provide to mosquitos).Such a comment should, of course, not be taken to trivialise the asymmetrical and inequal nature of many human-nonhuman relationships, and the presence of elements of power, dominance, and violence in the ways humans use and consume nonhumans. Weisberg (2009), especially, takes umbrage at Haraway's 'thinly veiled rationalisations… of violence', perceiving Haraway as failing to adequately account for the exploitation and oppression that characterises the life-world of many nonhuman beings (particularly laboratory or farm animals). Weisberg's critique focuses largely on Haraway's choice to 'valorise' 'animal dominators such as animal "trainers", experimenters and hunters', and her focus on 'sites of interspecies inter-relationality, sites of total domination or violence such as laboratories'. Weisberg sees Haraway's extensive use and discussion of these examples as lacking an appropriate acknowledgement of the dimensions of power at work, and as an 'affirmation of institutionalised violence' (p.60), thus undermining any ethico-political commentary Haraway's work might offer.

While Weisberg's commentary is a valuable canary call about the risks of justifying or rationalising relationships of violence and exploitation between humans and nonhumans, and I do

not intend to give the impression of diminishing those risks, I also want to examine what else is going on. I am walking a fine line between exploitation and appreciation, to read Haraway's 'response-ability' as an attempt to improve human-nonhuman relations akin to the ways humans have learnt to step away from violence as a useful or default method of communication between each other. I do this through questioning how we apply concepts of moral concern.

Thus, as mentioned above, I temper Haraway's potentially problematic perceived allegiance to anthropocentric and humanist arguments with my discussion of Sylvan and Bennett presentation of an *environmental* ethic, and Routley and Routley's arguments against the inevitability of human chauvinism. Like Weisberg, I think the inequal and asymmetrical nature of human-nonhuman relationships must be better accounted for in any debate over moral responsibility, but I am willing to work with and through Haraway's concepts to achieve that.

*

Haraway's argument – that responsibility is a relationship, and that the ability to respond, communicate and negotiate must have primacy in a sound moral framework – rests on a key premise. Haraway references human-technology interactions to make this point, particularly the work of Don Ihde. That is, Ihde (2005: p. 137) says, 'in so far as I use technology, I am also used by technology'.

Haraway uses this example from Ihde when discussing human-nonhuman relationships particularly in the context of research. She points out that: 'I must adapt to the specific animals even as I work for years to learn to induce them to adapt to me and my artefacts in particular kinds of knowledge projects' (2008, p. 262). What Haraway is saying here, is that meaning is not a one-way street. When I, as a researcher and volunteer, lived and studied at the Mission: Wolf sanctuary, I was attempting to provide meaning to the existence of the animals there. However, what was also occurring, was that the animals were simultaneously generating meaning for and to me. Through being an active participant in the care of those animals, as well as attempting to study and learn about something to do with them, I became, in Haraway's (2008, p. 263) words, 'enmeshed in hermeneutic labour (and play) by the material semiotic requirements of getting on together in specific lifeworlds'. I learned how to read and understand their body language and behaviours, and they learned my intentions and behaviours, and came to accept my presence as non-threatening. And I knew this by the way they didn't immediately run away when I approached their enclosures.

Eduardo Kohn's (2013) extension of Haraway's work, as articulated in his anthropology-beyond-the-human detailed in *How Forests Think*, emphasises the skilfulness of response and communication between beings, the active participation involved, and the meaning making capacity of living beings. He argues that material-semiotic relationship-making and communication is always ongoing between human and nonhumans. Elaborating on this capacity for relationship, communication and response, Kohn theorises living beings, including nonhuman

life, as 'loci of selfhood' and therefore meaning-making, including meaning-making about other living beings around them. That is, meaning-making is not just a human domain:

> *Such ecological challenges of understanding how the anteater eats ants, or how to make a scarecrow that will scare parakeets, or how to fish for catfish without being recognized by them requires an attentiveness to the points of view of other organisms. This attentiveness grows out of the fact that ants, parakeets, armoured catfish, and indeed all are other lifeforms that make up the rain forest, are selves. Who and what they are is, through and through, the product of the ways they represent and interpret the world around them and the ways in which others in that world represent them. They are selves, in short, that have a point of view. This is what makes them animate, and this animation enchants the world (Kohn, 2013: p. 161)*

If we appreciate nonhumans as capable of subjective experience, as Kohn is asking us to do, then we must also appreciate their ability to respond as thinking, experiencing selves. Response-ability is thus an adaptive and reciprocal, yet asymmetrical, dance between beings-in-relationship. Humans and nonhumans are both capable of responding as thinking, adapting, living beings. This has implications for moral 'regard' and how we understand and enact our moral responsibility to and for human and nonhuman life.

Reading this, I realised that all along, this was the goal of Mission: Wolf. This is what they meant when they said, 'don't scare the wolves': **any who would see the wolves must learn how to be seen by them.**

Awareness of the subjective experience of an other, including how you/they are experiencing me is, for Haraway and Kohn a crucial component of moral regard and moral responsibility. In the case of Mission: Wolf, educating visitors to appreciate the experiencing perspective of the wolf is a powerful part of the program. Similarly, attuning to how the other being of the wolf was perceiving us was inherent in the process of growing 'awareness' that many of the volunteers spoke of (see Box 3 below).

Box 3: Awareness

That individual, that animal is wanting to be away from you as much as possible – M:W Visitor

But the sense that this animal is intuitive to read your mind - I think comes across to everyone. The sense that I've been scanned, been interrogated… The wolf is aware of every muscle I move and if I move wrong, I talk with a Wolf from hundred yards away, and I scare him. And when you learn to not move the muscle at the wrong time and how to befriend them: It's an opening to communication with people and other animals – Kent, M:W Director

That's what I think gets people with the wolves is we've become so reliant on verbal communication and, you know, we all got to be eye-to-eye… Well animals: they don't even have to look eye-to-eye and they're completely aware that the wolf beside them just threw their ears back and tucked their tail in fear, and they've already spotted the mountain lion up on the hill without talking. They are so aware that that's what I think people get a dose of when they go in with the wolf. They get this clear communication without speaking. And they walk out going "phew" that was guttural. – Kent, M:W Director

When you can show people that just you, moving, just talked to that Wolf. Because the peripheral awareness is not just being aware…Peripheral interaction…? To be able to interact in your peripheral, and multitask – Kent, M:W Director

I would say self-awareness is the biggest thing and then trying to…. Like with the group coming, teach other people self-awareness. Trying to pass on that information, learned directly from the wolves… was difficult, but really enriching. - Lauren, M:W Volunteer

So that was really interesting. I've always been pretty aware of my surroundings, but I learned more how to be... I learned how to be more aware, I guess. Both of myself in those surroundings, and then of the surroundings around me. Because you have to be very aware around all these wolves – Mike, M:W Volunteer

Every time you're walking around the refuge, there's up to 28 wolves watching you, depending on where you are. So, you have to be aware of yourself and your own movements, of how you're affecting those wolves by either being tunnel visioned, not focused on them right at the fence and moving and scaring away, and then being aware of the world around, as in all of the other visitors that are doing the same thing and not… not learning the awareness that takes time here, and how they're affecting the wolves. And… in visits it's a little more confined, but you're even more aware of what everyone else is doing, to try to make sure that you're facilitating visits, and not scaring animals away – Mike, M:W Volunteer

*

Kohn goes on to connect this idea of selfhood to question of meaning, and the possibility of knowing other beings. He uses the example of the meaning assigned by his case-study people, the Runa, to the dreaming of their dogs. The Runa people believe that the dreams of the dogs have predictive power for their own futures. Kohn is saying that it is actually this belief – in the 'purported predictive power of dreams' – that has power and meaning:

> *The dreams and desires of dogs are, in principle, knowable, because all beings, and not just humans, engage with the world and with each other as selves, that is, as beings that have a point of view. To understand other kinds of selves, one simply needs to learn how to inhabit their variously embodied points of view. So, the question of how dogs dream matters deeply. Not only because of the purported predictive powers of dreams, but because imagining that the thoughts of dogs are not knowable would throw into question whether it is ever possible to know the intentions and goals of any kind of self. (Kohn, 2013: p. 132)*

Appreciating that another being can be making meaning about you is a core component of believing that you can communicate with them, and that response (and therefore response-ability) is possible. Another way to think about this is through considering that all organisms generate meaning from their context, through an iterative process of modifying and adapting between the meaning maker and their context (Bains, 2006).

To refer again to Haraway's concepts of 'encounter' and touch in the 'contact zones', this is

> *the kind of insight that makes us know that situated human beings have epistemological-ethical obligations to the animals. Specifically, we have to learn who they are in all their nonunitary otherness in order to have a conversation on the basis*

> *of carefully constructed, multisensory, compounded languages (Haraway, 2008: p. 256)*

To me this is a core part of any answer I might seek to what it means to 'care' for nonhuman others; for how that care is elicited and given, by whom, and for a construction of coexistence that is cognizant of the active participation of each being involved. Learning to communicate with the wolves at Mission: Wolf, and coming to understand their nonunitary otherness, was an essential component of 'getting on together' in the specific lifeworld that was the refuge (see Vignette 4). The continued existence of that institution as an education centre and animal refuge required that all participants, human and nonhuman, *become* in the contact zone. We were all constantly interpreting and adapting to each other's being-in-the-world/actions/behaviours.

Vignette 4: Learning to be seen

Ok Sam, how many wolves can you see?

"I just saw one over there!! It was lying on a box--!"

Ok yeh, that's Texx, I can see him down there. Pretty handsome, isn't he?

Well - how many wolves do you think can see you right now? One? Five? Ten?

Well actually, there's about 15 wolves that can see us right now. This is their home. And what do you think they think you are?

"Uhhh….?? A rabbit?"

Good answer! But no, not quite. They think we're all funny looking wolves! And if we're funny looking wolves, what do you think that makes you?

-- That's right, puppies! And what do you think they want to do with a puppy? Play with it of course! So, if you run around, and yell and shout, and PLAY, they're going to want to come out and play with you. Do you think they can get out of their enclosures? Nope, that's right, they can't. SO, if they see you playing, and they can't come and play, they're going to get a bit upset, aren't they? I bet you get upset when you can't join in on the game, don't you?

"Oh"

That's right. So, I need you to make them think you're a big important adult wolf. How do you think we can do that?

Will you walk around all slouched over, looking at the ground? No, that's right. Because then the wolf might think you're a bear, and bears are scary to wolves! Do you want to scare the wolf? No, right.

What else? What if we crouch down? Or lean on the handrails? Same thing. It makes us look odd.

So, I need you guys to all walk around with your heads up, nice, and tall and straight, and aware of what's around you. Cos that's how the wolves walk around. And we'll stay nice and calm and quiet, so they don't think we're playing without them.

And last thing? We just never put our hands near the fence. They don't really understand that we like to touch and pet things with our hands. They don't have hands like that. SO, they use their teeth. And if we put our fingers near the fence, they might

try and pull our fingers through with their 'hands' (teeth). And we'd all rather avoid that wouldn't we?

Ok, great. You guys have totally got this, haven't you! And I know you just saw Texx down there on his box. But you know what your best chance of seeing all the wolves here is? Making sure they're happy and calm. Cos this is their home.

3.4.5 Consequences for living and dying well

Given the above articulated perspectives on responsibility and moral accounting, I want to now articulate a further premise of this thesis as an examination of our relationship both to death (as a consequence of our actions and as a deliberate tool in our endeavours) and to life (as in how we do and how we want to coexist with other human and nonhuman beings). What does it look like to live and die well in this messy, uncertain, interspecies cosmology?

The concepts so far discussed in this chapter have been about how we think about ourselves and nonhumans – ethically, and categorically – and what might be some ways to influence that thinking and access the nonhuman – through encounter as a vehicle for regard, and through recognising our ability to respond. Now I turn to the ways these ideas have material and moral consequences. I am offering an examination of the processes whereby we learn and make decisions about human/nonhuman contexts and arrangements; and the objects/beings/selves with which we interact, and upon which we act.

Everyone makes decisions every day that have consequences for human and nonhuman life and death, whether recognised or not. For example, the direct and indirect deaths inflicted by omnivorous diet choices, transportation choices, and clothing choices, or the broad impacts of antibacterial drugs and vaccination regimes. And yet we are often especially challenged when confronted by explicit occasions of death, whether that be via the justification for a targeted culling program of a ‘non-native’ or ‘over-abundant’ species, or the decisions that must be made at the end of a beloved pet’s life.

The necessity of these decisions – of our always on-going participation in a multispecies world – and our human capacity for abstract and moral thought: together these mean we *are* responsible for our decisions about nonhuman death and life. These decisions embed the processes of storytelling, categorisation, responsibility, and relationality into the materiality of the world. Decisions are expressions of power, and I’m arguing that thinking these decisions through, morally and prudentially, is a vital part of a moral practice.

French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault’s work on power in relationships is relevant here. Foucault (1980) recognised that power permeates all areas of life: it is not an individual possession, but is embedded in social relations. Foucault emphasised that power is both productive and repressive – power can *make* and it can *take*.

Foucault’s body of work is extensive, but I only want to pick up here on two concepts – his articulation of ‘biopower’ and ‘biopolitics’. Foucault describes power in premodern societies as being characterised by ‘the right to decide life and death’, that is, the sovereign power to take life

or make die. Foucault argues that this sovereign 'right' was replaced following the rise of capitalist bourgeois society by what he labels as 'biopower': 'the power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death' (Foucault, 2008: p. 138), to make live and let die. Biopower takes two forms, according to Foucault. One focuses on controlling the individual through an 'anatomo-politics of the human body', built on the optimization, use, and integration of individual bodies into 'systems of efficient and economic control' (Foucault, 1980) . The other, Foucault (1980) defines as 'regulatory controls, a biopolitics of the populations'. The individual is subsumed to the higher value of the species, and biopower becomes about administering bodies and managing life. The governance of such administration and management is understood as the biopolitical processes of decision-making; political because involving judgement rationality.

In Chapter 5, I will elaborate on the biopolitics inherent to conservation science and practice, and connect this more deeply to the construction of coexistence I develop in this thesis, and particularly in Chapter 4. For now, I articulate Foucault's concepts as a key step in the logic driving my exploration of how our ideas of nature and the nonhuman have material and moral consequences for living and dying well, for 'getting along together' in the messy reality of interspecies coexistence.

Put more simply, Mission: Wolf founder Kent described his moral commitment thus:

> *I think that people that want to kill wolves, who have no appreciation, are the biggest threat to the future of humanity. If people have an appreciation for the Wolf, they have an appreciation for nature that supports us all. So that's my… challenge with people that just want to kill for fun. And I think that's where I focus most of my energy. And the… definitely the people that want to buy a wolf can be annoying. But I look at it as the lesser of two evils. If you walk away from here still wanting to own a wolf, there's a lot of wolves that need help. Bottom line. If you walk away from here after meeting a wolf, still think it's OK to kill things for fun. That? I failed.*

Kent's quote here embodies layers of his philosophy – including his appreciation of the ongoingness of life beyond the lives and deaths of individual beings – and explains his moral perspective. Death itself is not wrong, but callousness and destruction that disregards that ongoingness and relationality of life…? That is what he sees that needs to be changed. A useful reference can be made here to the writing of Creek-Cherokee professor of Native American literature Craig Womack (2013: p. 21), to further distinguish that is not necessarily about killing 'with respect' either, but about 'moderating disrespect': 'even in the best of circumstances butchering animals will never be respectful although in some instances it may be necessary'. Kent's perspective here is clearly that 'for fun' does not equal 'necessary'.

I want to specifically reflect on this point in light of the discussion presented earlier in this chapter regarding ethical frameworks and Routley and Routley's (1980) 'no-reduction position'. That is, a position of respect for the parts, the whole, and the relationships between them does not imply limitless reverence or sacredness. Interference is acceptable – this is the participatory, relational, getting along together of always ongoing coexistence. What I am arguing for, alongside

Kent, and Routley and Routley (1980), is for the moral necessity of good reasons *for* interference (such as the need to survive), rather than to *stop* interference (such as the ascription of rights based on the holding of properties).

3.4.6 Thinking Relationally & Relating with Nonhumans

> *People today will mostly focus on the points of connection, the nodes of interest like stars in the sky. But the real understanding comes in the spaces in between, in the relational forces that connect and move the points (Tyson Yunkaporta, 2019, Sand Talk, p. 91)*

Throughout my time at the sanctuary, I found it fascinating to think about what meaning the wolves were making about their interactions with the visitors: how they are interpreting the behaviours of the people, known and unknown, who traipsed into or past their enclosures. I do not think we can ultimately 'know' that meaning, but I do theorise that considering that the wolves are making one, or many, meanings, affords us a more compassionate outlook, and a more pragmatic one. In effect, acknowledging that two (or more) perspectives are at play in any interaction pushes us to question how we, and they, are experiencing, interpreting, judging, and responding to an interaction. The possibility of different interpretations implies the possibility of response, and of judgement, aversion, or acceptance.

The tenuous and fragile links formed and reformed through constant negotiation between significant others, both human and nonhuman, is an opening to thinking relationally about human-nonhuman coexistence. To live and die well is to be open to, and actively participate in, this ongoing negotiation. Haraway's concept of response-ability requires reimagining the categories through which we understand/think. And furthermore, that it is a two-way practice - interacting with others, as we are always doing, changes both parties, whether we wish it to or not. That is:

> *Encounterings do not produce harmonious wholes, and smoothly pre-constituted entities do not ever meet in the first place. …Meetings make us who and what we are in the avid contact zones that are the world. Once "we" have met, we can never be "the same" again. Propelled by the tasty but risky obligation of curiosity among companion species, once we know, we cannot not know. If we know well… we care. That is how responsibility grows (Haraway, 2008: p. 287).*

What does it mean to have 'met'? Nonhumans are beings we interact with, by necessity of being alive in the world. The 'rules of engagement' of those interactions get made by the participants: both humans and nonhumans co-create the relationship (although the two do not bring the same rational architecture to their appreciation of the relationship - nonhumans don't rely on rational orientation to the world to make their way through it). To get by in the world, we

have cognitive, practical, and philosophical processes for understanding interactions with other humans and with other nonhumans. These processes happen at degrees of consciousness: I am conscious of the practical fact that I need to let my dog outside to go to the toilet, but I take it for granted (now) that my cat won't murder me in my sleep (see Box 4).

We are arguably less conscious of these unconscious or 'taken-for-granted' processes, or of what was involved in their acceptance as assumptions. For example, categorization is one such process that shapes and constrains our behaviours, expectations and understanding (Bowker & Star 1999).

But these are processes not just of understanding, but also of relating: internal processes that are the inverse of external relating processes like communication and participation and adaptation. I am interested here in the connections between those internal and external processes of relating. I am interested in what *thinking* relationally might mean for *doing* relationships. Thus, I am interested in the processes for both understanding and negotiating those interactions between humans and nonhumans.

Box 4: Meetings and Greetings

I think it's mostly just because of their size and the fact that they're something you don't get to see every day. Yeah. So, it's extra special - M:W Visitor

For me the most striking experience was probably meeting the wolves, which is probably pretty common. And… Just being so close to a wild animal and seeing that they're not as aggressive or as timid, I guess, as I thought they would be - M:W Visitor

You know, it's like getting a sense of their personality or their spirits. It's just to see…. How one might like to hang back, one might like to come up. And how that relates to maybe their percentage of wolf or just, you know, their personalities. Cos every animal is different. That was really awesome - M:W Visitor

I just really like the philosophy of this place that it's about the animals needs first. He spent so much time being like "you need to engage with them in their language, on their level". And there's a lot of places where they're like "we're a sanctuary, but we're totally fine with showing them off" and here it's like, if they don't want to come over, they don't come over. So, you can see how much they care for the animals and also how dedicated to a really thorough educational experience they are - M:W Visitor

if you are doing a visit with someone who has already received a tour, they have a wildly different appreciation for the experience. They have the context that they need they have the appreciation for where these animals came from. Why they are part of our mission, why their job is important. They have all of that background that they're bringing into the visit with them. And they I think have a better sense of what it means to do a wolf visit. Whereas someone who just comes out of the parking lot, we give them the rules, they come and they sit down, pet a wolf, Abraham licks their face, they leave. That's a very, very, very different experience. I would say that the context given by a tour is vital. – Sophie, M:W Volunteer

*

Haraway is explicitly aiming to move away from that action commonplace to modern ethical negotiation. That is, as Warkentin identifies (2010:103) that the *'rational, disembodied human subject has become the centre… of knowing and moral judgment, which is the basis of a human-*

centred, or anthropocentric, ethic'. By contextualising the ethical and moral negotiation within the embodied interpersonal and interspecies relations that are always ongoing, Haraway, and Warkentin, seek to repeat or reveal that ethics and morality is, and always has been, a *praxis*. When ethical frameworks try to make hard and fast rules about what should and shouldn't count, should or shouldn't be morally considerable, they risk absolutism in the pursuit of avoiding moral relativism.

3.5 Conclusion - Constructing an idea of coexistence

I have used this chapter to articulate the concepts I am using to orient myself and this thesis, theoretically, and with reference to themes generated by my data. After initially articulating the boundary judgements I made about what system and what idea of improvement I was interested in, I covered the relevant ground of historical debates in environmental ethics and human-nonhuman moral relationships. In doing so I have further introduced experience of encountering the nonhuman and explored what that entails, includes the idea that response, the ability to respond, reciprocally though not necessarily equally, is integral to coexistence.

I have done this for the purpose of now moving on with the thesis to articulate a conception of coexistence using the device of *stories we tell stories with* (Chapter 4), and then discuss this conception with reference to the dynamics of biopower and biopolitics using the example of conservation science and practice (chapter 5). As noted in Chapter 2, my approach with this research is focused on a phronetic questioning of why human-nonhuman relationships 'are the way they are', whether this is desirable, and for whom.

Debates in conservation science and practice swirl around the concept of coexistence with nonhuman life, especially wildlife, and especially coexistence as oppositional to 'control' ((Bergstrom, 2017; Hartel et al., 2019; Wallach, Ripple, & Carroll, 2015). I will go into more detail on some of this work in Chapter 5. However, it is worth noting here that what is meant by coexistence in these contexts is often understudies, and not defined (Pooley et al., 2022)

With regard to carnivores then, Frank (2016: p. 739) offers this definition:

> *…coexistence entails behaviour of existing together, which could refer to peaceful coexistence or to coexisting while remaining rivals or adversaries... Coexistence takes place when the interests of humans and wildlife are both satisfied, or when a compromise is negotiated to allow the existence of both humans and wildlife… (2016: 739)*

Furthermore, many working in the space of carnivore conservation identify 'coexistence' as a necessary goal. For example, Carter & Linnell (Carter & Linnell, 2016: p. 575) argue that:

> *Given that shared landscapes often represent a vital part of their remaining geographic distribution, eradication of large carnivore species from these areas threatens their conservation…. Thus, operationalizing human-carnivore coexistence in shared*

> *landscapes is essential to global carnivore recovery efforts and maintaining (or improving) human wellbeing.*

If coexistence is the goal, what does that actually mean? And for nonhumans beyond carnivores? Is it about 'live and let live', or is a more active and participatory framing possible? What or who requires (or gives) care? And what can a deeper construction of coexistence offer about the moral question of 'getting along together', of living and dying well, in a multispecies world?

Constructing an idea of coexistence that is grounded in broader philosophical traditions and thinking about human-nonhuman relationships and environmental ethics is my purpose with this thesis. By using the theoretical concepts introduced above as orienting points, I consider what is meant when 'coexistence' is used to describe a goal in human-nonhuman relationships. How do processes of categorisation shape how we understand the participants or characters in the story or relationship? How are human ideas and categories of nature and nonhuman performed, and with what consequence? What can thinking of human-nonhuman relationships as involving encounter, encounter value, companion species, and response-ability offer for the always ongoing and everyday interactions inherent to coexisting in a multispecies world? Can relational thinking offer a way of accessing deeper or different understandings of moral obligation? How do ontological and epistemological framings of 'nature' and 'non-human' structure 'coexistence' as a paradigm of 'conservation', and how do these philosophical framings inform the bio-politics of human-carnivore interactions?

If we take seriously the implications of Routley and Routley's (1980, 1995) arguments against the inevitability of chauvinism, what does that mean for how we think about our always ongoing coexistence, and the moral justifiability of treating others in exploitative or impolite ways?

Chapter 4: *Beast, Machine, Companion* – or – Stories We Tell Stories With

Figure 5: (Top) Hayley, M:W resident rescued gray wolf, Hayley. (Bottom) Resident wolfdog, Soleil, and with M:W Volunteer, Elisa. ©PCannon, 2016

I think that the language of philosophy has to come back from the abstract heights on which it so often lives to the richness of everyday discourse and humanity. It has to listen to the ways that people talk about themselves and what matters to them. One very good way to do this is to listen to stories.

(Martha Nussbaum, 1988)

4.1 Introduction

Here we are, in the bowels of the thesis. I have introduced you to my case study institution, Mission: Wolf, laid out my research approach and design, and articulated the orienting concepts that frame and house my thinking. You have encountered many excerpts from my data already, as quotes and vignettes through which I tell the story of the wolf sanctuary, and as excerpts to illustrate how my data connects to the broader ideas in the literature.

With this chapter, I now want to move deeper into the constructive contribution of this thesis: that is, I have said I will offer a construction of coexistence that connects to historical debates and theories in environmental ethics and human-nonhuman relationships. I do this here through the use of the notion of story – by pulling apart and examining the two-way creative dynamic where relationships create stories, and stories create relationship.

4.2 The Story

Stories can be incredibly powerful. Take for example the strength and persistence of the many conspiracy theories that abound related to vaccinations, UFOs, 5G, or the moon landing. Or take the story of *Homo economicus*: the story that humans ultimately act out of self-interest. This concept of selfishness has informed the capitalist, neoliberal, dominant global culture so-much-so that even though many other models of human motivation and behaviour predated, and have since emerged in sociology and economics, the story of our egocentrism remains salient and pervasive in general society.

Conversely, the success of the human species - particularly our success in rising above our status as food – can also be told through the story of our ability to co-operate; to be social beings (Harari, 2015). And that cooperation is built out of shared stories: stories that we use to tell ourselves who we are, to explain how the world works, and to justify what we want and how we get it. Stories also help us to foment abstract ideas into tools of civilisation: ideas like money, property, progress, and equality.

One of these shared stories is the story we all tell ourselves about our relationship to nature. We use this story to explain to ourselves who we are, how we fit into the world, and what our 'purpose' is: why we do what we do. Furthermore, we use stories to explain how and why other beings do what they do.

4.2.1 Why do we have stories?

> *Storytelling is a tool for knowing who we are and what we want*
>
> *(Ursula le Guin, 1989)*

We use stories to explain the world to each other, and to explain ourselves to ourselves. Stories also play an important role in setting up our expectations for how others will behave, our interpretations of that behaviour, and what causes things to happen. All cultures have stories, and while there are many similarities, occasioned by our biological similarities as humans, there are also many differences. These differences, according to human ecologist Stephen Boyden (1987, 2016b), can be accounted for, at least to some extent, by the different material relations between humans and nonhumans that characterised different geographies, different arrangements of humans, wildlife and vegetation, and different groups of people throughout history.

Some human societies, perhaps especially those which lived in places where large predators also lived, such as Europe, are filled with stories of nonhuman nature as a Beast that needs to be tamed or destroyed: wild, reckless, dangerous creatures with a thirst for human blood (e.g. many of the stories documented by the Brothers Grimm (1812). To establish their right to inflict harm in the face of such devilry, the story developed of humans being granted 'dominion' over nature by God (according to a long theological history in Greco and Judeo-Christian tradition) (Passmore, 1974; van Tine, 2017)). Motivations for behaviour were ascribed to nonhuman creatures based on stories of evil, greed, and avarice, such that the wolf killing sheep to eat for its survival became an 'enemy' worthy of absolute destruction.

Eventually, as our biological, physical, and chemical knowledge grew, stories built from more scientific ideals permeated into general society, and took a place alongside religious dogmas. 'Nature' became knowable: controllable, manipulable, understandable, and reducible (Merchant, 1980). These stories helped us to understand the biology and behaviour of life, the 'inner workings' of ourselves and other life. Previously mysterious Beasts became Machines, bodies driven by biology and instinct the way computers run scripts, or cogs run clockwork. In this version of the story, animals were predictable, if you just uncovered their underlying biological mechanisms. This thinking could be applied to how predators hunted prey, where birds migrated, why wombats burrowed. Expectations for and reasoning given for nonhuman behaviours morphed – the lion killing the antelope was not evil, it was just a part of nature running its course. Animals did not feel emotions, were not capable of judgement, abstract thought, or symbolic language.

This mechanistic characterisations of nonhuman life both competed and blended with prior stories of human-nonhuman relationship, leaving entwined legacies (Haraway's 'terrible histories'), both impersonal and affective.

Other stories also existed, of course; ones that did not subscribe to either of these motifs, the Beast, or the Machine, but rather considered nonhumans as companions: present, active participants in the hermeneutic mesh of life. Haraway's use of 'companion species' (see Chapter 3) is relevant here. Many historical and current indigenous representations of nonhuman life and human-nonhuman relationships can be understood to appreciate the interconnected relationality of all beings: the constant 'interacting in reciprocal relationships within a dynamic system of life

and knowledge' (Yunkaporta, 2019: p.193). Post-colonisation, many of these stories were appropriated into mainstream cultures, giving rise to the popularity of ideas like having a 'spirit animal', or a totem.

Altogether, these stories of humans and nonhumans were not merely theological or practical, they were ontological and cosmopolitical: they presented and represented ideas, understandings, and beliefs about what things were in their essence, and about the rightful or appropriate place of everything/everyone in relation to each other. Furthermore, as some cultures grew and others disappeared, the strength of different stories also waxed and waned. This historical perspective is useful to consider how the relationship between humans and nonhuman nature is currently understood: including how we understand our moral and ethical obligations and responsibilities to and for nonhuman nature. Stories shapes our perspectives on what or who requires care, and how those requirements or obligations arise and are fulfilled (see Box 5).

Box 5: Wolf stories

Something that also seems to be really effective is telling these wolves' stories like they are your friend or like they're a peer. They're not just an animal, they have a life story. And they came here from many different backgrounds and have had many different experiences, both good and bad. And so, I guess framing the wolves' experiences in a way that is I guess more relatable to people. That they spend more time thinking of them as individuals, rather than just "that's an animal that I want to touch". Giving them that subjective view of their life, I think is pretty effective – Sophie, M:W Volunteer

4.2.2 Stories that shape us: Biohistory and the bionarrative

To explore this historical perspective further, I now turn to the work of the human ecologist, Stephen Boyden. As noted briefly earlier, Boyden's (1987; 1992) biohistorical approach describes a theory about the material relationships of humans and society, and demonstrates the usefulness of scientific enquiry to help us remember, re-examine, and reimagine the stories of relationship told about human and nonhuman life. For Boyden (2016b: p. 145), a bionarrative is 'the story of life on Earth, including the emergence and growth of human civilisation and the interactions between humans and the rest of the living world'; and Biohistory, then, is the 'study of history of life on Earth, up to the present moment, including the interactions between humans and the living systems of the biosphere'.

Boyden's bionarrative describes the vital connection between the material biological interactions of humans and nonhumans – and our cultural adaptations or maladaptations to such interactions – as a core part of our evolution as a species. That is, cultural and biological arrangements both drive and result from each other; and have done so throughout human evolutionary history. Our cultural stories are a component of our genetic/memetic evolutionary success or deviation: and maladaptive stories of relationship contribute to ecological crises that existentially threaten our (and other) species.

Part of the focus in this chapter on the 'story' is intended to be a way of accessing this material interaction between culture and biology, and the consequences of the categories and ideas we perform through story. Stories are both shaped by, and give shape to, the material relations between humans and nonhuman nature. Boyden characterises 4 phases of human cultural evolution, centred on the basic energetic and material relationships that sustain them, and labels these as Hunter-Gatherer, Early Farming, Early Urban, and the Exponential or Anthropocene Phase.

The shifts between these four phases can be understood to occur through cultural adaptations that 'ushered in a new phase of human existence' (Boyden, 2016b: p33). Boyden identifies these cultural adaptations as the use and control of fire, the innovation of farming, urbanisation, and the industrial revolution (Boyden, 2016b), and describes these adaptations as 'watersheds'. This explanation of human existence appreciated the influence of both biological evolution and cultural evolution: as our material relationships with the nonhuman shifted, so did the ways we understood (and talked about) that relationship. For Boyden then, culture (as institution, story, civilisation, technology) is inseparable from life itself:

> *The central theme of biohistory, then, is life — not only in the evolutionary past, but also as the source and mainstay of everything that goes on in human society today. Civilisation and all its institutions, economic arrangements, technologies and works of art are manifestations of life, and all are totally dependent on life processes.*

Boyden's phases are thus drawn with specific reference to the material, energetic, and technological aspect of human interactions with the rest of the living and material world, and are firmly rooted in a systemic scientific understanding of life processes and relationships. In the first phase, hunter-gatherers subsisted on the resources available to us through our own metabolic power: that is, how much energy it took for us to catch the deer, harvest the tubers, or trap the salmon, and so on. Later, as, we began to harness and control the energy of sunlight available to us through plants we had cultivated, we became agrarian and our relationship to our resources, to each other, and to other nonhuman lives changed. The energetic transformation afforded by agrarianism entailed the re-working of the stories we told ourselves about our relationship to nature. We came up with new stories to explain how the world worked, how we knew who we were, and why we were doing what we did. Some of those stories were formed around mastery, dominance, and entitlement; some around stewardship, responsibility, and care. As Thomas Berry (1987) wrote (quoted on p. 15) stories gave our lives purpose, inspired and guided us, and explained our suffering.

The consolidation of resources and energy made available through the outputs of agriculture led to the Early Urban phase, drastically influencing the way humans lived together in societies. The scale of food made available through agricultural production meant large numbers of people were able to be distanced from the actual production or acquisition of their sustenance. According to Boyden (2016b: p. 34): 'urban cultures evolved that regarded the natural world as alien and

threatening'. He also notes that the ecology of an urban dweller was very different from that of a hunter-gatherer or early farmer.

Boyden then characterised the fourth cultural watershed of human evolution through the philosophical movement of the 'Enlightenment', the subsequent Industrial Revolution. This phase has seen vastly greater material and conceptual distance between some humans and the sources of our sustenance, and thus very different ecological relationships between humans and nonhumans. Boyden's theory characterises these watersheds and all their inherent activities through the framework of adaptation: everything is done to adapt in some way to the current context, but some things are proven maladaptive once understanding grows or the unintended consequences become apparent: for example, cheap and accessible fossil fuels drove an explosion in agricultural productivity across the world (the 'Green Revolution')… but also led to climate change and other harmful consequences on the environment and human health (Pimentel & Pimentel, 1990).

The Enlightenment period in scientific history had a particular concern with understanding how the world worked, and human society (broadly/generally) has benefitted from the scientific discoveries thus produced. Reductive study of the mechanics of life is useful when seeking to, for example, add weight to a chicken as quickly as possible so that you can feed more people (/make the system more efficient by selling it earlier and profiting quicker). But this is why Ison (2018) distinguishes between systematic and systemic, and why Flyvbjerg (2001) focuses on phronesis. Understanding the mechanics of a system can help you understand points of leverage, and potential consequences of biophysical intervention or manipulation. But such a systematic understanding cannot tell you why you should intervene 'there' and not 'here'. Furthermore, as Ulrich (2001) and Midgley (2003) emphasise, our knowledge is necessarily bounded – we can't know everything – and the more complex the system, the more potential to create unintended consequence when we make assumptions about the extent of our knowledge. Thus, the possibility of maladaptation.

Stories of dominion and control, of separation and antagonism, developed throughout these cultural watersheds, and now permeate stories of human-nonhuman relationship. Our current era has been dubbed the Anthropocene due to the elevated influence of humans on many aspects of the rest of the natural world, from atmospherics to hydrology to geology, and so on (Crutzen, 2006; Steffen et al., 2016). This is yet another story about our relationship to nature. These stories – of civilisation and progress, of mastery and management, of influence and intervention – all serve to describe and define how we see our relationship to nature and nonhumans, and what we think ought to be desirable arrangements and relationships into the future.

These dominant stories are not uncontested or uncritically accepted. There are always counter-stories that struggle to be heard, but once traction is gained, stories can powerfully change the course of human adaptation: think of the civil rights movement, woman's suffrage, gay

marriage, or conservation itself, as a movement. See Box 6 below for an illustration of stories of adaptation and relationship at M:W:

Box 6: Adaptation and maladaptation at Mission: Wolf

> *I've had to confront some of my own personal biases about wolves, about people…. people who come here. What I want personally out of life. It's really shaken that up. But people…. people are… I think more adaptive than I give them credit for. Same with the animals – Lauren, M:W Volunteer.*
>
> *all these, kind of, tragic flaws that come with any humans working together [as volunteers at the sanctuary]….a lot [of] communication difficulties and, as with any group of people, personalities meeting together and working together … … whether or not people like each other can completely affect the work or the environment. And I mean part of the blessing and the curse of this place is living and working where you sleep, where you eat. Where are you living on top of people it's…. it's really, really intense. And I think that allows people to get to spaces that they normally wouldn't otherwise – Laura, M:W Volunteer*
>
> *In this day and age, I mean we got a ball rolling that's not going to be stopped. So, the key is how you keep that ball rolling in a direction that doesn't crush everything, and to me the only way to do what you guys are doing right here. Education. Teaching people choices and consequences – M:W Visitor*

Marxist notions of fundamentally altering the modes of production are relevant here. Boyden's concepts imply that altering the modes of production means the entire social superstructure – the cultural adaptations and resultant stories of relationship – will have to adjust also. We are no longer hunter-gatherers, nor early farmers, but Marx (1867) is arguing that we don't necessarily want to be urban industrialists either. Novel arrangements and stories both come with and are a direct result of our material relationships with our environment. If we take the stories of modernity, neoliberalism, and late-stage capitalism as examples, whatever happened in the past that got us here – subjugation, colonialism, rampant industrialisation (Ghosh, 2021) – now that the earth is 'full', do we need different stories?

In this full earth, how do we share and coexist, not just with other humans, but with other nonhumans? Why? As Flyvbjerg (2001) urges us to question: where are we headed? Is it desirable? For whom? Might we work towards a concept of coexistence based not simply on moral obligation, but one that also accounts for how coexisting well enriches us too? Perhaps, the stronger argument is not just that we want to know that nonhuman life is living well, but that it is constitutive of our own survival and wellbeing as individuals and society going forward for nonhuman life to flourish...

Boyden (2016b) describes this position using the neologisms of 'biounderstanding', as in a shared understanding of the story of life on earth and the human place in nature, and 'biosensitivity', as in the idea that human societies can live sensitive to, or in tune with and respectful of, the processes of life and seeking the health of all. I have found his articulation of these concepts, along with the bionarrative, as a useful analytical tool through which to examine

and articulate the idea of stories as both constructions of and constructive to human-nonhuman coexistence.

I have peppered this thesis throughout with references to story. Thomas Berry's articulation of our need for a story to sustain us; Ursula Le Guin's (1989) offering to examine stories as the carrier that holds 'things in a particular, powerful relation to one another and to us'; Stephen Boyden's use of concepts of biohistory, the bionarrative, and biounderstanding to explain these powerful relations between us and our material existence; and the story of Mission: Wolf.

The reason I chose to focus on Mission: Wolf as my case-study for this research project was not simply because they were doing a fascinating educational program about wolves, but because there was a far richer context for that educational program in the way the sanctuary was continually co-created by the relationships between the beings living there, and the way this shaped the way the sanctuary existed and operated. It is creating and telling different stories about our relationship with nonhumans (see Box 7).

Box 7: Wolf stories pt 2

It's a very interesting story. I mean the wolves obviously are incredibly cool. You're seeing them. They're majestic animals but I just think that this place exists and how it exists is the most memorable part…. 15 miles down a dirt road, literally in the absolute middle of nowhere. It's self-sustaining. It's got all these people here from all over the world – M:W Visitor

We learned also that the more space we gave the animals, that didn't necessarily mean that they would use it! If we would go in with them and wander the space with them, they would be all about it. But when we weren't there, they would either… they would stay down near the corner where they could see the other animals, but you wouldn't see them a lot out exploring. Every now and again you would, but not like you would think, like "oh we've given these animals this huge pen, let them run free"…You know "let them go". They are… they're so hooked into each other and the people that, because of that pack nature, that family nature, and they want to see what's going on with everybody, and that's their main priority – Tracy, M:W Director

We set Mission Wolf so different in that it wasn't about sustaining people, it was sustaining a sanctuary for wolves. And what I've left it as is we basically created a facility that's open for anyone to use. And now we've got enough people that want to use it, now we're having to go "OK, here are some rules. Here are some limits, so we don't destroy the place in our process of using it" – Kent, M:W Director

4.2.3 A problem in the Story

The premise alluded to through the above articulation of Boyden's bionarrative concept is that the stories that got us here (i.e., late-stage capitalism in the Anthropocene) cannot take us forward (Boyden 2016b; Berry 1996). To move on from these old, often cruel and exploitative stories, involves recognising their foundations and their consequences. For example, a story common to recent scholarship about human-nature relationships describes our 'disconnection from nature' (Abson et al., 2017; Ives et al., 2017; 2018). By its very premise, this story is one that emphasises separation: that is, that humans are separate to, thus can be disconnected from, nature. A related story that permeates much scientific and religious discourse describes humans

as ‘managers’ or ‘stewards’ capable of intervening in and influencing an external, knowable, mechanistic system (Passmore, 1974). Additionally, the goals of such interventions are understood through stories: e.g., of biodiversity, of species, and of ecosystem services (Lorimer, 2015). These stories hold power. They have become hegemonic in national and global institutions, and ecological challenges are increasingly framed and examined from this perspective. The lenses of technology, economics, and science are applied to identify the ‘problem’; and, consequently, technical, economic, and positivist scientific ‘solutions’ are proposed, considered, and implemented (Kingsnorth 2017).

Kingsnorth articulates this perspective in his *Confessions of a Recovering Environmentalist* (2017). He argues there that the ‘problem’ we are facing is not one of technology or science: if it were, we would apply all the technological and scientific solutions we already have. Rather, he says, our current ecological ‘problem’ is a problem of relationship: a problem in the story we tell ourselves about our relationship to nature. Kingsnorth is also concerned with the erasure of a sense of ‘sacredness’ in the relationship, arguing that the story of separation replaces a sense of the sacred with ‘cold, rational, calculation’.

Kingsnorth is loudly denouncing the dangers of this story of civilization, the ‘story of progress’. If 'sustainable development' is the goal of a rational, enlightened, humanist society - what are the consequences? The more people we keep alive, the more resources we will consume; and the externalities ignored by the stories of capitalism, consumerism, technology, and progress which describe our daily lives require economic, ecological, *and* ethical consideration. Not only must we ask whether a future built by those stories is possible - i.e., sustainable - but is it worthwhile? Is a world solely populated by humans and human-constructed 'civilisation' a world we are striving to 'protect’? And if not, what is the other component? The 'Other' with which we want to share that world? And how can we morally account for that 'Other'? This is what I am working toward through connecting the many orienting concepts introduced in Chapter 3: how do our affective logics shape what world we see as possible? How can our growing our ability-to-respond improve the lives of all living beings?

Boyden shares Kingsnorth’s perspective on the power of story, though not the rejection of science that Kingsnorth seems to advocate. Boyden’s work on ‘biosensitivity’ and ‘biohistory’ is deeply rooted in theories of evolution and genetics, and articulates the ways that our story of our relationship to nature has shaped our current cultural institutions and arrangements, especially when those are considered within the paradigm of human evolution and the material relations between human and nonhuman life.

Boyden (2016b, p. 2) holds that ‘the human capacity for culture, and therefore culture itself, are products of biological evolution’ and that ‘through its influence on human behaviour it has big impacts on other forms of life’. By ‘culture’ here, Boyden (2016b: p. 2) is referring to ‘the abstract products of the capacity for culture, such as learned language itself and the accumulated knowledge, assumptions, beliefs, values and technological know-how of a human population’.

Boyden argues that these cultural arrangements can be changed, and society can shift into a 'biosensitive' next '5th phase' of evolution: that is, one that is 'sensitive to, in tune with, and respectful of the processes of life' (Boyden, 2016b, p. x). Doing this will require 'a radical transformation in the world views and priorities of the dominant cultures of the world…. one based on a shared understanding of the story of life on Earth and the human place in nature' (Boyden, 2016a, p. 42); Boyden dubs this shared story 'biounderstanding'. How we might reach such a shared biounderstanding, what the world might look like if we can, and how we might think of ourselves and 'Others' differently if we do, are all a part of the mission of this thesis in examining coexistence as more than just what it means to 'care' for nonhumans.

Thus, these ideas of a problem in the story we tell ourselves about our relationship to nature, the need for a new shared biounderstanding, and the potential to redefine how we understand both ourselves and other nonhumans are key premises of this chapter. I am presenting my case-study of M:W throughout this thesis to share the fascinating examples it provides of the power of stories to create biounderstanding and facilitate mutual flourishing and coexistence.

4.2.4 Stories as powerful biounderstanding

Stories play an important role in creating this shared biounderstanding, particularly in crossing the threshold between individuals and society, or between what sociologists call structure and agency (Hays, 1994; Sewell, 1992). Individuals tell and believe stories, but stories become bigger than any one person through ongoing retelling. We forget they are stories, and they become the structures through which we understand the world; becoming taken for granted and accepted as impermeable in the mainstream, even as they are contested and change and evolve on the margins.

Scientific enquiry is constantly unearthing new knowledge to extend our stories, but science has also been accused of being problematically reductive. Fortunately, science itself is not a monolithic beast and is not the 'enemy' here. Science is full of wonder, discovery, fantasy, and promise. The stories being told today in quantum physics, subatomic chemistry, epigenetics, and biology are extraordinary (Al-Khalili & McFadden, 2014). Haraway (2016) writes about the potential for SF – understood simultaneously as science fiction, science fact, situated feminism, speculative fabulation, and the 'string figures' of narration practices – to offer transformative new ways to 'reconfigure our relationships to earth' and nonhuman Others.

Different cultures across the world and throughout time have articulated and exemplified different stories of relationship to nature. Many different academic disciplines lay a claim to a story of this relationship. Anthropology has a story. Ecology has a story. Sociology, Psychology, Ethology: all have stories. Philosophy has stories. Stories make a claim to the actual – to be an account of what *is*.

But stories make claims that need not necessarily be founded in reality for the story to continue to be told. They do not need to be verified (or even verifiable) for people to listen to

them and believe them. And one story's claim does not make other claims impossible. Stories are not mutually exclusive: they are intermingled and adaptive. They become internalised and negotiated within each of us.

And yet, I sometimes feel like I am drowning in stories. For anyone attempting to address issues of moral responsibility in human-nonhuman relationships it can feel like there is a lot of information, and a lot of contradiction. Too many disciplines saying the same thing with different words; or different things with the same words. Reconciling these stories is not just a useful exercise; it becomes vital to making sense of this world of ideas and developing a pragmatic moral framing. Science is good at saying what *is*, and at verifying that. Replication is useful. Excluding the active voice of the participant, abstracting from the value laden human, is important. Boundary judgements obviously occur, but science is very good at producing answers. The scientific process delivers reliable knowledge. But Science cannot tell us *what should be*. This is where judgement rationality, practical wisdom, and phronesis are at play.

The stories we tell and accept and believe give form to our ways of being in the world, and the decisions we make. Anthropologist Marilyn Strathern (1992, p. 10) realised that 'it matters what ideas we use to think other ideas', and Haraway (2016: p.12) translated this to recognise that it also matters what *stories we tell stories with*:

> *It matters what matters we use to think matter with; it matters what stories we tell to tell stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds; what worlds make stories.*

Haraway's point connects to Kingsnorth's problem with the story of relationship between humans and nonhuman beings. Reductive scientific stories of animals as machines figure mechanistic interventions as solutions, such as bringing in cane toads to control agricultural pests, only to see them take over ecosystems and waterways and create ecological disaster. Folklore and stories of beasts like wolves as 'big and bad' figure interactions as inevitably violent and frightening.

4.3 Stories we tell stories with

To ask 'what *stories we tell stories with*' requires breaking down what we understand a story to be. How are the characters characterised? What metaphors and categories are taken for granted in the storytelling? And who is doing the telling?

A story will commonly contain characters, a setting, and a plot, often one with conflict, and a resolution. A story will also commonly be linear, and singular, aspects often reinforced by the way they are told. But what do we do with a story that is circular or iterative? That has no clear good guys or bad guys? That does not have a clear conflict or resolution? That does not even necessarily have a beginning or an end? And that does not exist singularly - that is, when there

are many different versions of the story? It would be impossible to offer something that answers all these questions. But part of the answer must lie in what the purpose of telling a story is in the first place – what is the meaning being made – and in looking at who gets to tell them to whom.

With this chapter, I am seeking to construct a concept of coexistence that adequately accounts for the always ongoing material and moral relationship between beings in the world, one that fits into a shared biounderstanding in a worthwhile world. This previous section has set up my interrogation of the role and power of stories, and framed the problem in our story of relationship. I now want to move on and break down the powerful components of that story – the characters and how they are framed and understood, who the storytellers are, and how the relationship itself is understood. This connects back to the broader research questions driving this thesis: i.e., if 'coexistence' implies notions of care and stewardship, then what or who requires or gives care? How do those requirements or obligations arise and how are they understood? And with what consequences?

4.4 The Characters

To make a story of human-nature/human-nonhuman relationships, we need characters. Who or what is 'nature' and the nonhuman? Whom or what requires or gives care? Who do we think we are in response to nature and nonhumans?

4.4.1 Categories

The role of categorisation is most relevant to the Characters in stories, who are often reduced to tropes or stereotypes to be processed neatly by our brains – e.g., the 'good guys' or the 'bad guys'. This can be useful. It can also obscure. Categorisation of characters is a core component of how we understand the relationships between them in stories. Further, it is a key component of the ways that stories have power to define and shape those relationships.

As discussed in Chapter 3, human cognition relies on processes of categorisation to minimise the amount of information our brains process or rely upon in any given context. Lakoff (1987) calls these categories the 'metaphors we live by' - they give us our reference points by which we navigate our experiences. I want to draw the connection here to the idea of *stories we tell stories with*: when we put things into categories, we are marking them as discrete entities with certain features. We are also defining their relationship to us based on our previous understanding or experience of things in that category.

As introduced in Chapter 3, Bowker and Star (1999) write about the process by which categories or objects become naturalised within communities of practice (COP), or upon acceptance as a member of a COP. That is, 'the strange and contingent nature of [a COPs] categories as seen from the outside' are forgotten (Bowker & Star, 1999: p. 294-5). Bowker and Star argue that choosing the appropriate categories to which to subscribe (to take for granted, to

naturalise) is a performative action - a construction that is made and remade every day. By using categories when we tell stories, we are (innately and unconsciously) *doing something*. We are *performing* those categories and reinforcing them in the minds of the tellers and the listeners, reinforcing them for use in future stories. This is what I take Haraway to mean when she asks, 'what stories do we tell stories with'.

Further, Bowker & Star (1999: pp. 312-3) point out how we forget stories are stories, when their telling crosses boundaries between groups:

> *When an object becomes naturalized in more than one community of practice, its naturalization gains enormous power to the extent that a basis is formed for dissent to be viewed as madness or heresy. It is also where ideas like "laws of nature" get their power because we are always looking to other communities of practices as sources of validity, and if as far as we look, we find naturalization, then the invisibility layers up and becomes doubly, triply invisible.*

Bowker and Star are arguing that we use categories to explain things and relationships: that the use of the categorisation is doing something, and that this doing often goes on below our conscious recognition. Because people are simultaneously members of many COPs, they are constantly doing work to juggle these 'multiple memberships and the multiple naturalisations of objects' (Bowker & Star, 1999: p. 286). We are all doing this categorical work every day (Bowker & Star, 1999: p. 286-7):

> *… In the simplest seeming action, such as picking an article of clothing to wear, is embedded our complex knowledge of situations. …these situations involve multiple memberships and how objects are used differently across communities. Many of these choices become standardized and built into the environment around us; for example, the range of clothing we select is institutionalized by the retail stores to which we have access, traditions of costuming, and so forth. To think of this formally, the institutionalization of categorical work across multiple communities of practice, over time, produces the structures of our lives, from clothing to houses.*

When we turn this lens onto the story we tell of our relationship to nonhuman nature, we begin to see how we are performing categorical work in the telling of that story (See Box 8). This is one angle through which to access the possible differences a story of coexistence and multispecies flourishing might require and offer.

Consequently, for example, a story of relationship built on stories of separation and opposition dictates how the characters in the story are understood, and how they interact with and react to us humans. Especially salient in this case are the ways we understand and interpret the behaviours of nonhumans such as animals within such a story. Animals were beastly: dumb, controlled domestic beasts of burden; or wild, untameable, savage beasts of the jungle, steppe, and mountains; they can also be read as 'pure' sources of goodness, and unattainable incorruptibility (Soper, 1995). In any of these version nonhumans are objects. Not selves, not actors, not protagonists. On the occasion that they are given roles, say, in fairy tales, they are often anthropomorphised, given human voices, words, and desires.

Box 8: Perceptions of the wolf

…the part of the tour which I think we've gotten away from a little bit… but asking people "why do you think people want to buy wolfdogs so bad?" or "why do you think they want to own them so bad?" And we point to the two most prominent motivations for that, and one is a desire to own or dominate nature, in the form of a wolf or wolfdog. This… maybe macho or… It is a uniquely American thing, to commodify it and use it as… to show it off to your friends and whatever. And the other side of that is the "oh the wolf is my favourite animal, it's my spirit animal, that's my nature totem" and all that. And both of those are wrong. They're on different ends of the spectrum but they're both anthropomorphic – Austin, M:W Volunteer

A lot of people come here thinking that wolves are scary, and that they're going to eat them – Shannon, M:W Volunteer

There's a lot of proscriptive… post-interpretation to the things that animals are doing. I don't think anthropomorphism is inherently bad, especially if you're coming from an academic setting… if you know a lot about the ecology and biology of wolves, and you're talking to someone else who knows a lot about the ecology and biology of wolves, then there's that caveat that you both know you're anthropomorphizing. But when you talk to the general public, and they don't have that basis, then I feel you run into a problem of them not recognizing that these are not humans. Yeah and they don't have the same experience that we do….Viewing them more as humans versus animals…doesn't seem super beneficial as far as recognizing their importance in an ecosystem or their importance in and of themselves. Appealing to 'these are like people so you should care about' them seems like a pretty circular mindset – Megan, M:W Volunteer

4.4.2 Human vs Nature

Humans and Nature are often juxtaposed as opposites, as different categories. Furthermore, the word 'nature' is often used, ambiguously and instrumentally, to define that which is 'not human' (Soper, 1995). Nature is variously: plants, animals, wildlife, geology, organics, landscapes, ecological communities. Nature is individuals, nature is ecosystems, nature is passive, nature is destructive. Nature is 'our environment'. Furthermore, explaining and defining nature in these categorial ways determines how we explain and define ourselves.

Nature is also the word we use to explain the fundamental or inherent features or qualities of something. We use it this way to explain the inherent characteristics of things, and we use it to explain ourselves to ourselves: by defining what is and is not 'human nature'.

Soper (1995) describes how the concept of 'nature' is used to discriminate, as each particular author sees fit, both our 'sameness' with the nonhuman world (by describing our desires and needs as 'natural', which implies 'pre-ordained', or 'given', or 'right'), and our divergence (i.e., as a means to condemn that which is not 'natural', e.g., as homosexuality was (and is still) seen by some people).

The use of 'nature' with reference to 'human nature' is used, as needed, to say both that healthy human norms come from 'nature', or to show how humanity has deviated from the 'natural'. According to Soper (1995), for the Enlightenment, 'culture' is an essential corrective to 'nature'; and for the Romantics, 'nature' is a release from the repression or deformations of

'culture'. These stories of 'nature' are thus used to suit the argument as needed for the party doing the arguing. This inconsistent usage contributed to the simultaneous moves in academia and literature to a) pull away from the concept of 'nature' to specify for example, 'nonhuman', 'more-than-human', 'other- than-human' when trying to think about issues of, for example, rights or welfare, and also b) address current ecological issues through focusing on natural-ness, as in for example, 'nature-based solutions' and 'natural capital'.

Amongst all these different words or phrases used to characterise that which is not human, I have chosen to consistently use 'nonhuman' throughout this thesis (with the exception of acknowledging the 'more-than-human' methodologies influencing this work), as I feel this phrasing best captures both the living and non-living 'everything else' that matters here. It is important to recognise that even with this choice I am doing categorical work – I am using language and particular terminology to differentiate and to draw boundaries around.

4.4.3 Dehumanisation, 'Unnaturalness', and Othering

Another aspect of the ways that we tell the story of human-nonhuman relationships, and of how we describe and understand the characters in that story, is found in the ways that processes of dehumanisation and othering are used in separating humans or groups of humans from other humans and beings. Philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (1949) described otherness as a basic category of human thought, as the expression of a duality between the self and the other, and part of a process of differentiation.

These categorical processes are ways of placing people or beings outside of moral considerability, a key way that people conceptualise their moral obligations. It is interesting, in this discussion, to examine the processes by which we dehumanise other humans, and what that might say for how we think about nonhumans.

People dehumanise others to disinhibit ourselves from violence. Human moral obligations not to kill others of your own kind (without just cause) are a salient component of many moral frameworks. Killing things not of our own kind entails less inhibitions. That is, we perform the categories of 'other-than-human' and 'not my kind' as a way to avoid having to morally justify violence to those we consider 'other'. 'Othering', in this argument, causes beings to lose moral considerability (Livingstone Smith, 2020). Haraway (2008: p. 78-79) discusses this as the way that we disinhibit ourselves from 'thou shalt not kill' type moralities, by categorising things as 'those who may be killed and those who may not'. Thinking categorically, humans must fall into the 'not killable' category, and this, as Haraway notes with reference to the possibility of 'Sacrifice', is problematic. That is:

> *Within the logic of sacrifice…within which there is no responsibility towards the living world other than the human… only human beings can be murdered. ….to make Man merely killable is the height of moral outrage; indeed, it is in the definition of genocide.*

Because humans are worthy of moral considerability, they cannot become killable. But things that are placed in the category of not human, can be made killable. These dehumanisation processes are performing the category of 'not-my-kind', making the object therefore not worth defending, and able to be killed without remorse or guilt.

The concept of ‘human rights’ is one method that has been proposed to address this, by demarcating who is morally considerable based on membership of the group ‘human’. Some examples of demarcation commonly offered are the possession of sentience, language, rationality, or the ability to suffer. Furthermore, the extension of recognition of these capacities to nonhuman animals is one attempt to broaden moral and ethical consideration beyond the human. I addressed this earlier through my discussion of Sylvan and Bennet’s *Deep Green Ethics*, and Routley & Routley’s arguments against the illogic of arbitrary demarcations of moral considerability (see Chapter 3). Here I want to extend and connect these points to my discussion of categorisation. Calling on Haraway (2008: p. 79-80), again:

> *I suggest it is a misstep to separate the world's beings into those who may be killed and those who may not and a misstep to pretend to live outside killing. The same kind of mistake saw freedom only in the absence of labor and necessity, that is, the mistake of forgetting the ecologies of all mortal beings, who live in and through the use of one another's bodies. This is not saying that nature is red in tooth and claw and so anything goes. The naturalistic fallacy is the mirror-image misstep to transcendental humanism….*
>
> *I think what my people and I need to let go of if we are to learn to stop exterminism and genocide, through either direct participation or indirect benefit and acquiescence, is the command "Thou shalt not kill." The problem is not figuring out to whom such a command applies so that "other" killing can go on as usual and reach unprecedented historical proportions. The problem is to learn to live responsibly within the multiplicitous necessity and labour of killing, so as to be in the open, in quest of the capacity to respond in relentless historical, nonteleological, multispecies contingency. Perhaps the commandment should read, "Thou shalt not make killable”.*

Haraway’s point is that morality is not about drawing arbitrary lines around what groups of people or beings should be morally considerable, and therefore not killable. This connects to Routley and Routley’s argument (articulated earlier here, in Chapter 3) that an anthropocentric ethics based on the holding of properties is arbitrary and unjustifiable. Rather, accepting the inherent entanglement of living beings in ecologies of mortality, and remaining open to the ongoing negotiation that entanglement requires, means striving to increase our ability to respond, to be response-able, and to act with a respect for the reciprocal participation involved. See Vignette 5 for a story from Mission: Wolf about negotiating those entangled ecologies of mortality.

Vignette 5: Useful wolves

> *When Kent first arrived in the remote ranching valley in Colorado, he was not exactly welcomed by the local cowboys. Their livelihoods depended on raising cattle, and often the achieved this through accessing public lands [and the rule in those parts of*

rural America was that if you didn't want cattle on your land, you had to fence them out (KW, pers comm April 19, 2018))

For a lot of the local ranchers, the idea of someone intentionally bringing a predator into their area was considered outrageous. They spent a lot of time and effort trying to keep predators away. Coyotes, bears, mountain lions were the main culprits, because wolves no longer roamed that valley as they once had.

But eventually, an understanding was reached. An accommodation

One thing that invariably attracted predators was a free lunch – a carcass. If a rancher did have an animal die, or need to be put down, for whatever reason, they usually had to then dispose of the body. And it's costly to dig a hole big enough for a cow, or a horse.

And those wolves living in their enclosures down the road needed to be fed… So, Kent was able to offer something to the ranchers: free meat disposal.

This practical utility was an opening for relationship building between the strange new incomer and the established community. And Kent prioritised these relationships, put time and effort into being a reliable participant in the arrangement.

To return to my construction of coexistence, this point is especially relevant to the questions of whom or what requires or gives care. Otherness and the Othering processes by which we make beings 'not-my-kind' are not reserved only for other humans. They also help explain the ways we think morally and ethically about nonhuman nature.

To conclude this section: in stories we use categories to differentiate things, and to explain our relationships to those things. That is, we create distinct categories of characters in stories: antagonist and protagonist, human and nonhuman, living and nonliving, thinking and non-thinking. More than that, categorisation tends to split things conceptually into mutually exclusive dualisms - either alive or dead, thinking, or non-thinking – and we forget that categories are only our ontological representations of reality, not reality itself.

With the next section of this chapter, I will move from who the story is about, to the equally important component of stories – who gets to tell them.

4.5 The Storytellers

The story of our relationship to nonhuman is automatically told from our human point of view: a perspective that is necessarily always contextualised by time, geography, and society. However, this perspective does not mean that all other characters be mere objects in the story, the 'it' against which an 'I' relates. This denial of the subjectivity of others is not only not necessary; it is not valid.

4.5.1 An Ecology of Selves

As referenced several times already, the work of anthropologist Eduardo Kohn (2013) and posthumanist philosopher Donna Haraway (2008, 2016) are useful in my attempts to understand subjectivity, to move beyond anthropocentric ethical frameworks and explore the subjective 'I' - the "who" - that is both involved in and telling these stories.

Kohn, in his thesis on *How Forests Think,* sought for 'a better way to attend to our relations, to that which lies beyond the human' (2013, p. 9). In proposing an 'anthropology beyond the human', he explored the relationships between living beings through the concept of an *ecology of selves.*

Kohn (2013, p. 16). based this concept on the premise that a ''self,' at its most basic level, is a product of semiosis', and meaning is a 'constitutive feature of the world, and not just something we humans impose on it.' Thus, Kohn sought to demonstrate the animacy of the world through the entanglement of intentions and consequences inherent in any action taken by a 'someone' – and that this 'someone' need not be human for interpretation and consequence to nonetheless be real. The ways that humans and nonhumans get along in the world is through the ability to appreciate that we each have a point of view (see Box 9).

Box 9: Recognising the subjective experience of the 'other'

She wanted to show people, and she would come up to you…. and she would look at you. And it was like the first genuine experience I've had of somebody looking directly... Well, she was somebody! But it was like the first instance that I had of something … of her looking into my soul. You know what I mean … when she would make eye contact with you, it was so intense. You could see the universe in her. And it was magical, but at the same time extremely sad. Because she, like everybody else here, deserves to be wild" – Tricia, M:W Volunteer

The personal interaction, you can see them from afar, but seeing them up close, you really get a sense of their intelligence and their beauty and their personality. It's like getting to know someone – M:W Visitor

Any amount of sudden movement that you do can affect the way that they are. If you are in in a great mood, you could tell that they are affected, and if you're in a negative mood as well – Dax, M:W Volunteer

This is an important point in my discussion of decentring the human storyteller. As Kohn (2013: p. 118) describes:

> *Some notion of the motivations of others is necessary for people to get by in a world inhabited by volitional beings. Our lives depend on our abilities to believe in and act on the provisional guesses we make about the motivations of other selves.*

Kohn also focuses on the awareness and ability to consider the perspective of another being, which allows us to interact with and communicate with nonhuman others. This includes Kohn's examples cited earlier, considering how it is that we can make a scarecrow that will effectively scare birds away from a crop, or how we can sneak up on and catch a catfish in a still body of water. Actions such as this rely on our awareness and projection of the point-of-view – that is, the

subjective experience – of the nonhuman other. Kohn is arguing that it is only by appreciating that nonhuman others also represent and interpret the world around them – including a self-awareness of how others view them – that we are (/may be) able to get-on-together. I introduced this point from Kohn earlier (in my discussion of response-ability in Chapter 3), that both humans and nonhumans make meaning about the world, and I reiterate it here to emphasise the connections between my data and this theory.

Kohn recognises that this 'perspectivism' is not merely a construction but is an 'ecologically contingent' necessity to understand others as semiotic beings in material 'relational webs' that extend well beyond the human. Kohn is careful to address the connections between agency and anthropomorphism that plague attempts to discuss or understand the subjective experience of nonhuman others. That is, subjective experiences of animals are often theorised not as purposeful, thinking, feeling selves, but as representation of human-like emotions and motives, where their agency and self and will exist only insofar as I can explain them with my own referents. Rather, Kohn's (2013, p. 94) anthropology beyond the human is, in his view, 'grounded in an ontological fact: there exists other kinds of thinking selves beyond the human'.

Moving on, Kohn argues, after Weber (1948), against the 'disenchantment' of the nonhuman world – i.e., the removal of any imbuement of purpose or meaning or agency or subjectivity in the world – and offers an appreciation of selves, both human and nonhuman, as the 'loci of enchantment' through which we can 'imagine a different sort of flourishing in this world beyond the human in which we live' (Kohn, 2013, p. 90). This imagining is a key part of the story of relationship and construction of coexistence I am seeking with this thesis.

I want to pause here and consider for a moment the importance of this point about selves as 'loci of enchantment', and consider how we even know there is something to be morally accounted for. Analytic philosophers talk about the concept of 'strict identity' as the lasting thing that endures throughout changes in qualia, that is, what makes persons 'strictly' identical over time? Social sciences and other areas of philosophers talk about identity in a different way - as qualitative, as a common identity; e.g., as BIPOC, as queer, as feminist. This sense of the word identity is important, but the concept of a strict identity is what I want to focus on here in the ways that we think about human and nonhuman life. This is important for the discussion of the self as presented in this thesis. What is the self that can be having an experience, and how is that ongoing through time?

Professor Laurance Splitter (1988) argues that we are making a category mistake when we think about identity as based on qualities. That is, when we pick out an object, then describe it by its qualities, we are missing the fact that the object exists regardless of the qualities we interpret from it or assign to it. Therefore, he says, it's a logical confusion to refer to ourselves by our qualities. I can consider myself as continuing through time (as long as I am alive), even though my qualities might change. If we survive, we are still ourselves.

That there is something important going on when we consider something to be the 'real thing' - as opposed to a virtual simulacrum, a manufactured artifice or replica - is an important component of how we understand nature and the nonhuman, including how we attempt to morally account for it. When we are in the presence of strict identities of wildlife our understandings of 'wildness' are reflected in how we understand identity as something beyond a construction.

Our capacity to build relationship relies on the other remembering us, remembering how we related last time. It requires the ongoingness of two beings with awareness of their ongoing selves. This capacity is not limited to humans – nonhuman beings have existence, strict identity, self, agency, and stories separate from human ascription of qualities (e.g., wolf, dog, wild, beast etc.).

4.5.2 An ethics of significant otherness

What does it mean to appreciate the subjective experience of another? Haraway's concept of response-ability, already introduced in Chapter 3, draws heavily on Emmanuel Levinas' (1980, 1981) philosophical and ethical theories. Haraway uses Levinas' theorisation of 'otherness' to conceptualise alternative moral negotiation. That is, rather than subscribing to the idea that othering disinhibits moral obligation, based on moral obligation as being created through assigning the possession of moral considerability only to groups or kinds or properties, Levinas' theory puts forth the idea that otherness is itself the root of moral obligation. This also separates his work from other ethical frameworks based on building empathy or care through paying attention to what we have in common or through attempting to consider the world from the other's point of view. Since we cannot truly *know* that other's point of view or experience, Levinas is more concerned with the simple fact that the other *has* a point of view – a subjective experience – what he calls 'face'.

For Levinas (1981), being confronted by the face of an other forces oneself to recognise this unknowableness, and the uselessness of applying categorical thinking (and associations) to our moral consideration of that other being. That is, knowableness implies calculation, risk-benefit comparison, and for Levinas, morality should not be about mere calculation. Levinas' premise is that our responsibility to one another is based on recognising each other as experiencing selves, ultimately unknowable.

Furthermore, as Haraway articulates, it is not the discrete entities that matter so much as the relationship that occurs between beings:

> *...entities with fully secured boundaries called possessive individuals (imagined as human or animal) are the wrong units for considering what is going on. That means not that a particular animal does not matter but that mattering is always inside connections that demand an enable response, not bare calculation or ranking. Response, of course, grows with the capacity to respond, that is, responsibility (Haraway, 2008: pp. 70-71)*

Our interactions with these unknowable others happen through multidirectional relationships, which shape our capacity to respond, our response-ability. More than this, Levinas says we can only develop a sense of our self through encounters with Others.

4.5.3 Co-adaptive capacities, Otherness, and moral Response-ability

Part of the story of relationship we tell ourselves is about how and why nonhuman beings exist and act. We tell stories about why and how they do what they do, just as we tell ourselves stories about why and how we do what we do. We also tell stories about how, when, and why we do or ought to intervene in their existence: either to 'encourage' them to act differently, or to remove their existence altogether – that is, to kill them. This includes the *stories we tell stories with*, like the story of native and invasive, as in the dingo or the wild dog in Australia; or stories of wild or domestic, as in the wolf that can be reintroduced or the dog that can be rehomed, but what of the wolf-dog hybrid that fits neither path?

Our ethical systems think about death and suffering in ways that are relevant to this discussion of the subjective experience of nonhuman Others – especially the story that death is an escape from suffering. I note this here because the ways that human 'managers' use death as a tool in the name of 'animal welfare' or 'conservation' is a relevant expression of the subjectification of the experience of Others: one that we don't necessarily recognise as the extension of a subjective experience, and one that we don't similarly extend to ourselves. Historian of science Daisy Hildyard (2020) captures this contradiction poetically in her essay *Negative Love*, noting that 'we let humans suffer pain in dying that we would never allow an animal to experience'. The idea that a 'good' death can be a solution to suffering involves a 'complicated process of identification and imagination. When a vet puts down an animal, the grounds for doing so call on a reasonable projection of the suffering that the human believes the animal to be experiencing' (Hildyard, 2020). Death for human and nonhuman nature is often traumatic, sudden, shocking, brutal. Alternatively, it can be an equally 'distressing' long decay and debilitation. To call for 'humane' execution in response, to appreciate that an animal suffers, is to appreciate that it has a subjective experiencing self.

What does it mean to 'live well' if we do not also consider what it means to 'die well'? We are morally responsible for considering how we think about and do death with nonhuman others, just as we are morally responsible for how we think and do death with human others. If we believe the story that tells about the subjective experience of suffering and death experienced by nonhuman others, it should be possible to also hear the story that describes a co-adaptive, flourishing, coexistence.

As Haraway says, focusing *only* on suffering is not satisfactory (2008, p. 311):

> *Capability (play) and incapability (suffering) are both all about mortality and finitude. … I want a different protocol for asking about a lot more than suffering, which at least in US idioms will regularly end in the self-fulfilling search for rights and their denial through abuse.*

Thus, to imagine a thriving, flourishing future human-nature coexistence, I argue that it is possible, and useful, to recognise the ways that nonhuman nature is experiencing us, especially how nonhumans are always already adapting to and coexisting with humans. I want to reflect on the ways we interpret those adaptive behaviours - particularly how we ascribe motivation and agency.

To offer recognition of subjective experience also asks us to take responsibility for ourselves, morally and practically. If we are to recognise an other's sovereignty, we must make a claim to our own. Dietz and York (2015) expressed this point clearly through examining the relationships of exploitation that currently exist between humans and nonhuman animals in capitalist societies. They pay particular attention to the ways that nonhuman animals contribute to human well-being: through their use as raw materials, as processors of raw materials, and as labour. Dietz and York (2015) identify the processes of efficiency as a key mechanism through which nonhuman animal agency is denied or reduced. Further, they point out that recognising agency, creativity, and the skilful contribution of nonhuman animals to processes of production exposes, inversely, the 'normal' exploitative stance with which we usually engage with nonhuman animals (Dietz and York, 2015).

Recognising agency in nonhuman beings is thus a political act. This is what Lorimer (2015), Monbiot (2013), Haraway (2008, 2016), Plumwood (1993, 2006), Mathews (2012), (and the many others speaking out in this way), are attempting to do. That is, they are addressing the relationships of exploitation that Dietz and York (2015) identify through questioning how we morally consider nonhuman Others, and through rethinking the onto-epistemological framework through which we appreciate their experiences of and participation in a multispecies flourishing.

Examining the stories and storytellers is useful also, because although we cannot always hear or understand them, a multitude of nonhuman stories are being told around us, continually (Rose et al., 2012). Our own daily experiences of encountering other beings offer us one way to appreciate theses other stories – for example, when the common Australian suburban dwelling bird, the magpie, swoops me during early Spring: I can rationalise that I am in its territory, and it has babies it thinks it is protecting (even as I simultaneously tell myself it is a vindictive and single-minded piece of the proverbial). Vignette 6 relays my observations of one storyteller at M:W:

Vignette 6: Hayley's story

> *Hayley was a wolf born at a safari park called 'Bear Country', in South Dakota, where the laws about owning wild or exotic animals were lax. This establishment would sell bear cubs and wolf puppies for profit, but in the summer of 2009, following the Great Recession, few had funds to spare for such frivolities. Mission: Wolf ended up taking*

in eight wolf puppies that year, from this safari park: two litters. Upon arriving home to the refuge, it became apparent these puppies had parvovirus, a common, usually fatal, canine virus that they should have been vaccinated for. Three of the eight died soon after, but Hayley survived. As the runt of the two litters, she was often picked on by her siblings and the other litter, but she survived that too, with a collection of scars, and a deformed ear. As she grew up, she became one of the most reclusive wolves at the sanctuary, rarely coming close at feeding time; and spending her days observing visitors from a far, perched up on the hillside in her enclosure.

The wolves would always greet the day with a chorus of howls. Breakfast or big feed days also brought a cascade of howls up and down the gully where the enclosures were located. News and gossip travelled fast in this pack.

The howls of the wolves were evocative and complex. The volunteers would sometimes start a howl midway through the tour, usually just to show off, just for fun. Howling well took practice, but the wolves were forgiving, and usually responded…or maybe they just found us entertaining?

But often, one lone howl could be heard. High-pitched, almost beyond human hearing, this howl often went unnoticed by the un-practiced ears of visitors, and was rarely answered by the other wolves. It was Hayley. But what was she saying? Why did no one else respond?

The many and varied discoveries of science offer further insight, often at scales beyond our personal capacity to encounter: we have learnt that other lives are existing all around us, even inside us. Each of these lives is not 'telling' a story of relationship: but they are living one. Those lived stories interact with ours at a multitude of levels; and those interactions form the very basis of our own lived experience, consciously or unconsciously. But more than that, the relationships themselves, between all the interconnected lives on earth, *are* the story. We are beings-in-relationship.

These are the points I want to expand on with the closing parts of this chapter: that there are alternatives to a categorical understanding of moral obligation; that we can recognise nonhumans as having a subjective experience, and thus a face, a capacity to tell their own stories; that we create each other, and are thus response-able to each other through encountering significant otherness. This theorising of moral obligation and relationality fits with Routley and Routley's 'no-reduction ecological outlook' introduced earlier, in that Levinas' (1981) theory of otherness also affects the default position for moral obligation.

4.6 Stories of Relationship

Critters do not precede their relatings; they make each other through semiotic material involution, out of the beings of previous such entanglements…. We relate, know, think, world, and tell stories through and with other stories, worlds, knowledges, thinkings, yearnings. So do all the

other critters of Terra, in all our bumptious diversity and category-breaking speciations and knottings.

(Donna Haraway, 2016, Staying with the Trouble, p. 60, 97)

So far, this chapter has set up the position that it is worth reflecting on the idea that we tell a story of our relationship to nature, that other nonhuman entities in that 'nature' tell their stories also, and *to* us, and that stories tell other stories. Furthermore, how we think about and understand the characters is relevant to how we understand and tell the story; and who is telling the story is relevant to its meaning, interpretation, and consequences. This chapter has also put forward that it is worth considering how we understand the relationship itself within those stories.

Haraway (2016) argues that a future of multispecies flourishing requires the primacy of sympoiesis (making-with/becoming-with), over autopoiesis (self-making); and encourages us all to consider better ways of getting-on-together, of living and dying well in a multispecies world. The potential for this multispecies flourishing starts with asking more interesting questions of ourselves and our nonhuman companion species and about the relationships between us through which we become. Haraway (2008: p. 208) is asking us to consider how we are constituted by our relationship, that we literally only become *through* our relationships – we are not merely beings, but beings-in-relationship.

4.6.1 Beings-in-relationship

The philosophical grounding of the idea that we are all beings-in-relationship is the performative new materialism espoused by philosophers Karen Barad (2007) and Vicki Kirby (1997). Older understandings of materialism, as in the ancient atomism of pre-Socratic thinkers Democritus and Epicurus, hold the metaphysical view that matter is passive, built from discrete atom-like blocks, and these atoms 'remain internally unchanging across their movements and encounters with one another' (Gamble, Hanan, & Nail, 2019, p. 114). This perspective allowed humans to be positioned as 'privileged, radical observers of a self-contained material world that remains unchanged by our observations of it' (Gamble et al., 2019: p. 115). Modern materialists – including Philoponus in the sixth century, Burdian in the fourteenth, and Bacon in the sixteenth – accepted this premise and added an explanation for the movement of matter by accepting the metaphysical real (as in reality) of *force* – 'a metaphysical power that caused bodies to move' (Gamble et al., 2019, p.115). Matter fit together in bodies like the gears in a clock: matter was atomistic, unchangeable, and incapable of moving itself. Instead, there was always someone (e.g., God/the soul), or something ('force'/natural laws) moving matter.

The passivity of matter is thus common across both ancient and modern materialisms. Matter is not creative or adaptive and must be motivated by some external mechanism or guidance. Furthermore, the ability of humans to know about this metaphysical reality, to grasp what is

ontologically 'real', was dependent, in older forms of materialism, on a story of human observational exceptionality that is fundamentally logically flawed (Routley & Routley, 1995). That is, our ability to know and question our reality does not, cannot, set us objectively outside that reality: rather, it is an embedded product of that very reality.

Various newer theories of materialism have attempted to shift away from this epistemological perspective to explain a non-anthropocentric ontological realism and recognise 'matter's intrinsic activity' (Gamble et al., 2019). Gamble, Hanan & Nail (2019) provide a comprehensive account of these attempts, from the vital new materialism of Liebniz, Spinoza, and Deleuze to the negative new materialism of Meillassoux's 'speculative realism' and the Object-Oriented Ontology of Harman (2019), Garcia (Garcia, Ohm, & Cogburn, 2014), and Morton (2012).

Gamble et al. (2019) conclude that only a *performative* new materialism adequately accounts for a non-anthropocentric and non-dualistic ontology, agency, and the status of human observation. Focusing mainly on the work of Barad and Kirby, this performative new materialism takes the ontoepistemological stance that all human activity is inherently and reducibly material, including our ability to 'observe' reality. In this account, things do not exist separately from their actions – there is no animating 'force'; instead, 'matter just is what it does' – and agency is defined as a relationship, not something one 'has' (Barad, 2007). Unlike ancient or modern materialism's account of matter as passive and unchangeable, Kirby and Barad's types of performative new materialism explains matter as 'iteratively transformed by each new movement or encounter' (Gamble et al., 2019: p. 114). Thus:

> *matter's iterative performances are always partly incalculable because they ceaselessly constitute novel entities and/as relations, thereby also ceaselessly generating novel possibilities and impossibilities that did not exist already (Gamble et al., 2019: p. 114)*

This is relevant to the account of human exceptionalism that older materialisms espouse. According to Kirby, if humans are merely 'performances of matter, as much as anything else', then anything 'allegedly exceptional' about humans – including language or rationality – is necessarily a 'particular inflection of a fully generalizable behavior of nature' (Gamble et al., 2019: p. 123-4):

> *Kirby begins from the premise that if there is no radical or absolute boundary line between things, including between humans and non-humans, then humans have no more monopoly over what counts as intelligence, language, or even scientific inquiry than anything else does.*

Humans are a stochastic mode of materiality that has the ability to self-reflect. We are not outside nature.

This radical perspective challenges much about how the story of our relationship with nonhuman nature is told in current academic environmental scholarship (such as the

'disconnection from nature' narrative). It is also relevant to how we 'do' environmental management or stewardship. Stories of relationship are not just about things – matter – as passive, discrete entities. The relationship itself can be a unit of investigation and analysis, and it is possible to account for the experience of all beings-in-relationship in a non-anthropocentric manner (see Vignette 7: Relationship building. This raises questions about meaning, agency, and moral consideration in thinking about what *stories we tell stories with*, about humans and nonhumans, and about how we coexist.

Vignette 7: Relationship building

One of the stories on the wolf tour is told at the enclosure of a smallish white wolf-dog called Soleil. She had come to the sanctuary after being bought from an exotic animal breeding facility in Ohio, by a man from West Virginia with a 'fascination for wolves', who thought she could be a pet. Her story was that, eventually frustrated by her fearfulness of people, this man thought the only solution was to kill her. A neighbour stepped in, and coordinated with a rescue focused on transporting animals in need, to collect Soleil from this man's home, and transport her half-way across the country to Mission: Wolf.

From these origins, both her experience in captivity so far, and her breeding as a mixture of wolf and dog, Soleil was not the kind of animal that sought human attention or affection. She was matched with another wolf puppy that arrived at Mission: Wolf around the same time, Orion, and as they grew out of puppyhood, they demonstrated they had no interest in being the wolves that greeted visitors to the sanctuary.

Mission: Wolf was specifically set up to accommodate animals like this, and Soleil and Orion were moved to an enclosure that afforded them some privacy. However, Soleil still exhibited signs of distress, and would often be seen pacing her fencelines in agitation if she could see people nearby.

Whilst the goal was never to make Soleil a 'pettable' ambassador wolf, and she could never be either 'released to the wild', or put back into a backyard, it would also have not been a good life for her to be in a constant state of agitation just existing at the sanctuary.

The goal then was a process of relationship building that allowed communication. That is, that Soleil understood the parameters of what needed to happen around her to keep the sanctuary running, and that her communication of her level of comfort or discomfort with this was being understood. The way the volunteers at the sanctuary achieved this, was learnt through a process of trial and error, but was built from foundations of animal behaviour and communication that M:W Director, Tracy, had learnt from working with wild horses.

Specifically, Tracy had learnt about the importance of appreciating the distance at which communication was occurring – the contact zone – which for a wolf or a horse, is a much greater distance than humans were used to. Similarly, Tracy had learnt about the usefulness of mimicry behaviours as non-threatening, and non-confrontational methods to greet and interact with nonhuman others.

Over time, by mimicking her movements at a distance, and reading Soleil's communication both of when she became aware of or uncomfortable with Tracy, Tracy noticed Soleil begin to 'calm down', and accept that nothing was wanted of her except calmness.

4.6.2 Thinking Agency with 'Wildness'

Recent scholarship has sought to find a concept to signify agency or liveliness beyond the human. Kohn's *How Forests Think* is one such attempt, as are Lorimer's (2015) and Braverman's (2015) uses of 'wild life', and Monbiot's (2013) use of 'self-willed' nature. The use of the word 'wild' is of particular interest to me, in the context of my case-study and the questions I am raising in this thesis. I introduce this discussion here to extend my consideration of what it means to decentre the human perspective in discussion of human-nonhuman relationships and coexistence.

Linguistically, 'wild' is a word of many uses. We can use it to describe a thrilling or exciting experience, as in 'that ride was wild!'. We can use it to distinguish categorically between the known/safe/tame/scripted/orderly domestic and the unknown/dangerous/unruly/chaotic wild. And we can use it to challenge those distinctions. Something can be both domesticated *and* wild, as in the ornery bull with a mind of its own.

… a mind of its own? Perhaps that is a clue. 'Wildness' is often used synonymously with 'self-willed': this is what Monbiot (2013) encourages us to recognise and seek in our relationships with non-human nature. Just as conspecific human relationships are improved by each party recognising and allowing for independence and subjectivity in experience and perspective, and the expression of sovereignty and preference in encounter, contact, and response: so too perhaps might our interspecific relationships be improved (see Box 10).

Box 10: Encounters with wildlife as formational

> *Yeah, and I find it…I mean, I grew up in the country, in a rural area, outside so much. It is…. and so much of interacting with animals is that it's something that you do not have control over, and you have to respond and pay attention to it to either get yourself out of danger...or negotiate with it to do what you want it to do. There's so much of that that people don't learn…. And like how Kent tells the story about… When you ask kids if they've seen a deer, and the kids in the city would be like "no", and that kind of interaction is really fascinating – Tracy, M:W Director*

Just as we struggle to always recognise, allow for, and celebrate wildness as independence, subjectivity, sovereignty, and preference in our relationships with lovers, family, friends, and community - so too do we struggle to appreciate and attend to such goals in our dealings with other species. But struggle does not equal give up: I want to argue here that we are essentially being asked to recognise a 'self' in this 'other' when we seek to recognise independence, subjectivity, sovereignty, and preference in their existence.

The notion of human observational exceptionalism in making meaning about passive matter leads to a certain blindness in our ability to recognise and respond to other beings. This default perspective of exceptionalism permeates much of how we think about, tell, and understand the story of relationship between human and nonhuman beings. By placing ourselves in the category of rational outsider, we claim authority to intervene in the system – to manage, conserve, steward, use or destroy the rest of the system. My argument with this thesis is that not only is this authority

based on arbitrary and unjustifiable moral grounds, but it also leaves us with a conception of coexistence that is categorical, unidirectional, and passive.

4.7 Conclusion - A Story of Coexistence

With this Chapter I have led you through many concepts and theories to connect the dots between my examination of story, and *stories we tell stories with*, and the components of a construction of coexistence that accounts for our dynamic always ongoing relationships and becoming-with with nonhuman others. I am doing this to contribute to Boyden's call for a shared biounderstanding and the evolution of a biosensitive human society.

Life processes are adaptive and dynamic and interdependent: this is Rachel Carson's (1962) basic premise in *Silent Spring*, and we cannot escape this constant interdependence/reliance/relationship. This thesis takes the premise that if we are fundamentally affected and constituted by the *relationships* we are in with other beings, then, as Haraway says, encounters 'in the contact zone' is where the magic of coexistence happens. How do we co-create each other, in co-presence? If, as Pooley (2021) implores, 'coexistence' implies notions of care and stewardship, then what or who requires or gives care? How do those requirements or obligations arise and how are they understood? And with what consequences?

To summarise further, this chapter has set up five premises to inform a construction of coexistence:

1. That the story/stories we tell ourselves about our relationship to the nonhuman world have changed, and are changeable;
2. that the story we tell ourselves about our relationship to the nonhuman world is powerful;
3. that how we categorise, understand, recognise, and morally account for the human and nonhuman characters in that story has powerful implications for how we get along together;
4. that a path towards a shared biounderstanding, the story of coexistence and mutual flourishing in a worthwhile future has to do with how we appreciate subjectivity, otherness, agency, and co-adaptive abilities between human and nonhuman life, and
5. that we are all beings-in-relationship, constitutive of each other, and in constant becoming-with.

To return to the research questions I posed at the end of Chapter 1, this chapter has endeavoured to articulate how we understand ourselves, natures, and nonhuman life. The final step is summarising the construction of coexistence I have been building towards. Informed by the orienting concepts I introduced in the last chapter and by the examples and stories in my data, my offering of a construction of coexistence is as follows:

- Coexistence is more than just stewardship or notions of care (unless these concepts adequately account for multi-directional and non-objectifying meanings);

- Nonhuman beings have to be considered as having 'face' (a subjective perspective and experience), and significant otherness;
- This perspective and otherness are what creates the moral obligation to get along together, to work towards living and dying well together;
- Coexistence is thus participatory and reciprocal;
- Coexistence is thus a process of constantly negotiating, responding, and relating to and with other beings.

Following from this, I am arguing that our capacity to be morally response-able is affected by our default categorical thinking, which affects our moral practices though establishing boundary infrastructures (taken-for-granted stories) which have consequences for the lives and deaths of all beings. Thinking relationally might allow us to become more skilful at living and dying well in the ongoing co-adaptation that is life in a complex multispecies world.

This is my response to Boyden's encouragement to reach a new biounderstanding. It matters what *stories we tell stories with*, what ideas we think ideas with. As established through the last two chapters, when thinking about moral human-nonhuman relationships, the properties of each party is less important than the relationship between beings. Prioritising the relationship as the basis for the obligation for moral concern creates a different set of criteria and defaults thought which to do moral decision-making (which I explore further in Chapter 5). Understanding that we co-create each other through our relationships, and that wildness and agency are relational, affects the ways that we negotiate our co-existence with nonhuman others, and changes the default settings for what moral treatment is warranted.

To return to Ursula Le Guin's encouragement (from Chapter 1) to recognise and tell different kinds of stories, this chapter has been an exploration of relationality and stories of relationship, and an attempt to draw on the data gathered at my case-study institution, sieved through the ideas of my wider theoretical explorations. The construction of coexistence that emerges is not necessarily a new story, but by examining the architecture of stories of relationship – the characters, the storytellers, how the relationship is understood and constructed– it can be a useful offering in opening the possibilities for re-thinking human-nonhuman relationships and coexistence. These stories have changed in the past, and can change again.

If, through this analysis of the architecture of stories and the *stories we tell stories with*, we can reframe how we understand and do our relationships with other human and nonhuman beings, and reimagine what we believe nonhumans are capable of… Perhaps through that work we can aspire and work towards a worthwhile future of multispecies flourishing; one where we share our life and worlds with a multitude of significant 'others'.

I will now take the set of relational properties of coexistence that I have articulated here, and apply my construction of coexistence to the context of conservation and biopolitical decision-making in that context in Chapter 5, and then elaborate on the processes though which we might

become more skilful at communicating and coexisting with nonhuman life in Chapter 6. Throughout, I will continue to employ quotes from my data to illustrate the experiences and lessons from M:W that connect, explain, or extend these ideas.

Chapter 5: Make Live and Let Die/Let Live and Make Die – or – Biopolitics in action

Figure 6: M:W Volunteer Elisa, visiting resident wolves Tiger and Rosie. ©PCannon, 2016

Considering coexistence involves acknowledging the limitations of a conservation framing on deciding which species matter, introducing reflexivity about who enacts and who is left out of conservation policies and actions, and considers the effects of all wildlife (including abundant, introduced and "pest" species) on humans and vice versa. It requires facing up to the tension at the heart of conservation between a devotion to purity and to diversity, and between an ethical commitment to scientific approaches to saving a fast-disappearing natural world, and recognizing other ways of being in that world.

(Simon Pooley, 2021, Coexistence for Whom?, p. 5)

5.1 Introduction

With this chapter, I will now return to one human activity where stories of human relationships to nature are continually told, performed, negotiated, and practiced by individuals and across collective groups within society: the field of 'conservation'. This is a rich context to apply the discussion of story, categorisation, biohistory and biounderstanding, otherness, and relationality thrashed out in Chapter 4. The science and practice of conservation has emerged and evolved rapidly over the last century or so, driven in part by the recognition that our material and moral relationships with the nonhuman world have gone through a substantial transformation post-industrialisation (Boyden, 1987).

As described previously, a key premise of this thesis is that human-nonhuman relationships and coexistence are always ongoing, and often in unexamined ways, layers, and scales. The conservation of nature is one realm where relationships between beings in the world are considered explicitly, at least in some regards. The performance of particular ideas and categories, and dynamics of power, can have significant material consequences on human and nonhuman lives and deaths through the decisions made about which arrangement of life is desirable, and how to control or care for that desired arrangement.

With this chapter I will introduce an analysis of the stories of relationship that shape conservation science and practice, and discuss the ontological basis thus created, how particular ideas and stories become powerful, and with what consequences. I will connect this to my discussion of relationality, agency, and coexistence though the concept of biopolitics.

5.2 Stories of relationship in conservation science and practice

The science and practice of 'conservation' is now pursued in many forms, each with their own, but often overlapping, foundations, goals, and means. The word 'conservation' itself represents an ontology and epistemology that has evolved over time (Mace, 2014), and I will elaborate on this point further shortly. Significantly, conservation science and practice incorporates and performs categories and boundary infrastructures through the ideas and judgements informing decisions and through the form and delivery of interventions planned and carried out.

As introduced in Chapter 3, Bowker and Star's (1999) explanation of categorisation uses the concept of 'boundary infrastructures' to explain the processes by which categories are naturalised within and across Communities of Practice (COP). 'Conservation' can be seen both as one broad COP, and as many expressions within that, each with their own, often overlapping, COPs. Each of these is an amalgamation of various permutations of ideologies, ontologies, and epistemologies regarding human-nature relationships, our moral responsibilities to and for 'nature' and nonhumans, and the appropriateness of intervention. Furthermore, as Lorimer's (2015) concept

of affective logic articulates, a COP can also value and include particular nonhumans over others. For example, Biodiversity Conservation, Ecological Restoration, Ecosystem Services, Rewilding, and Connectivity Conservation all represent ontological and epistemological variations on a theme and exhibit different priorities.

Certain ideas (e.g., of apex predators and trophic cascades), conservation 'goals' (e.g., rewilding), and framings of relationships (e.g., as disconnected or connected) become boundary infrastructures both between the various COPs within conservation, and across 'conservation' broadly in relation to other fields of human activity like agriculture or mining. Each of these COPs has a story explaining the relationship between humans and nonhumans, and human COP members perform categorical work in the actions or interventions they argue for or support. This can often lead to conflict between members of different COPs based on their different perspective on what lives and relationships are valued, and has real material impacts on beings, both human and nonhuman, involved in those systems being 'conserved'.

Thus, the stories that become taken-for-granted in a COP have power in structuring human-nonhuman relations, especially as they figure in research and 'management' in post-colonial/neo-liberal societies. For example, the legacy of an Enlightenment conception of nonhumans as 'machines' is relevant to how animals are appreciated in both wild and domestic contexts (see Chapter 4). This is exemplified by the reliance on unconscious 'instinct' as a key tenet in understanding the behaviour of wild species (problematised by Massumi, 2015); or by the application of concepts of efficiency and commodity in agriculture (Dietz & York, 2015). The characterization of nonhuman animals as automata is reflected also in conservation agendas that use death as a tool in the name of altering population dynamics within an ecosystem, because it assumes that adaptation on the side of the nonhuman is not going to happen or not going to happen 'enough'/quickly enough for the desired ecological or economic outcome.

Perspectives on conservation that do not recognise, or diminish, the always ongoing adaptation of nonhumans to each other and to humans, are performing a categorical action, one which can build blinkers to the opportunities for negotiation and *response* between humans and nonhumans (noting that negotiation implies that we will not always come out on top!)

Human-nonhuman relationships are not static, they are not singular, and they are not one-sided. Thus, any approach to broadening the scope for moral responsiveness (response-ability) and negotiation must account for the plurality and fluidity of how human-nonhuman relationships are, and the potential for co-adaptation inherent to them. Such an approach, to be useful in thinking and doing human-nonhuman relationships better, must encompass both how human-nonhuman relationships are constructed and understood, and by whom, but also what they *are*, materially, practically, and ontologically.

The construction of coexistence presented in the last chapter contains this nuance, and extends the idea of interspecies relating past simple notions of care or stewardship. Thinking

relationally can, I argue, assist in improving our capacity for co-adaptation and coexistence. The following section outlines the connections I see between morality in relation to the nonhuman, as expressed through decision-making concerning life and death, and alternative moral conceptions re otherness and co-adaptation. I do this by returning to a few of the key themes so far articulated, namely, the consequence of categorisation and taken-for-granted boundary infrastructures, and the role of *stories we tell stories with* in reinforcing particular arrangements of human-nonhuman relationship.

5.2.1 Ontologies of Conservation

Mace (2014) indicated that the ontologies that form the foundations of conservation science and practice, especially conservation biology in the developed world, have changed in the last 60 years. These ontologies are the paradigms that frame and dictate the rules and goals of conservation.

Mace begins her typologies with a conception of *nature for itself*. Built on the scientific interests of 'wildlife ecology, natural history and theoretical ecology' (Mace, 2014: p. 1558), this approach focuses on protected area management and endangered species conservation, and can be understood as biocentric or focused on individual species. This period is exemplified in the wilderness ideals emergent following European traditions of forest management in the early 19th century and gaining traction in America during the mid-20th century (as written into Law in the 1964 Wilderness Act (Pub L. 88-577).

Next, Mace identifies *nature despite people*, connected to increasing awareness in the 1970s and 80s of deforestation, overharvesting, habitat destruction and invasive species spread, and exemplified initially by Rachel Carson's (1962) *Silent Spring*, and the US ESA of 1973, leading to the federal protection of many species, including wolves.

By the late 1990s, in response to perceived shortcomings of this latter *nature despite people* paradigm, the ontology changed again to one that attempted to incorporate the dependence of humans on ecosystem services, thus: *nature for people*. Anthropocentric ideas of *nature for people* valued conserving ecosystem services as a worthwhile goal because of all the ways that human health, livelihoods, and well-being relied on nature. This development also stepped away from focus on individuals to a more ecocentric attention to the ecosystem level, driven partly by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. However, the Earth systems processes that underpin ecosystem services operate at multiple spatio-temporal scales. Human management, intervention, and governance of ecological systems via political processes is therefore challenging, because human political timeframes and the sheer complexity of ecosystems are difficult to reconcile.

Thus, more recently, there have been moves away from the utilitarian and linear perspective embodied in *nature for people* to embrace two-way dynamic relationships between *people and nature*. This last framing, while it embodies idealistic conceptions of nature's intrinsic value and

attempts to appreciate dynamic and multilayered human-nature relationships, is, by its very plurality, much harder to measure and manage for (Mace, 2014).

The metrics with which conservation needs and 'success' are measured have evolved alongside the ontologies. With the more recent attempts to appreciate *people and nature* simultaneously, and to account for growing knowledge about global systems and trends, these metrics have multiplied. The complexity of measuring the multilayered and nonlinear relationships between biophysical matter and abstract human values adds complexity to any attempt to rationalise conservation objectives, economic trade-offs, and inherently biopolitical calculations about life and death. Mace points out that 'there is a risk that any implementation of *people and nature* will lack the analytical foundations that made the earlier framings both deliverable and measurable' (2014, p. 1560: emphasis in original).

Mace (2014, p.1558) is clear to note that these ontologies of conservation are not consecutive, and not linear, but rather form a 'pluralism of views and motivations', and current conservation science and practice combines aspects of all four framings. The ontologies are not mutually exclusive: they have all grown to have a role, and often to be in competition or furious cooperation in the science and practice of conservation (Linnell et al., 2015).

They can also clearly be understood through the concept of boundary infrastructures I am employing in this thesis (Bowker & Star, 1999). As such, these ontologies of conservation give rise to the different *systems of interest* that find their expression and meaning in the multitude of conservation approaches: from biodiversity conservation to connectivity conservation, to rewilding, and novel ecosystems. Each in its practical application performs slightly different ideas about human-nature relationships and adheres to different categorical boundary infrastructures. Consequently, each frames the goals, rules, feedbacks, and parameters of the system slightly differently (as per Meadows, 1999).

Mace (2014) is using this description of the development of the goals and motivations of conservation science and practice to point out that we are not always doing what we think we are doing when we do conservation. That is, it is important to understand the philosophical, ontological, and epistemological foundation of conservation activities, as unreflexive praxis can produce unintended or contradictory results. This can be seen, for example, in the current conflicts between 'traditional conservationists' and the rise of supporters of 'compassionate conservation' or 'novel ecosystems' (Driscoll & Watson, 2019; Rohwer & Marris, 2019; Wallach, Bekoff, Batavia, Nelson, & Ramp, 2018). This conflict reflects different affective logics and ontological commitments. Nuances about what lives should be made or let to live (or made or let to die), and *why*, are not made explicit, perhaps partly because they are not reconcilable, being based on different moral and ontological grounds. Furthermore, each of the ontologies that Mace describes inherently subscribes to a metaphysical, cosmopolitical, and ethical perspective on the relationship between human and nonhuman life. Negotiating between these - e.g., between

biocentric, ecocentric, and anthropocentric perspectives on ethics - is part of the challenge of conservation in the current era.

The evolution of wolf conservation in America is an interesting reflection of these changing ontologies of conservation, with initial protection offered by the ESA (1973), and growing understanding of how species interact in an ecosystem leading eventually to the reintroduction programs of the mid-1990s. This process was not without conflict, however, and the experiences of the educators from Mission: Wolf demonstrate the impact of this at the ground level (see Box 11).

Box 11: Conservation and wolf education

…in the past, we've done numerous - like 10-years-worth - of political venues. From going to the Fish and Wildlife Service, to showing up at meetings and conferences, when they were first working to get wolves into Yellowstone, we showed up to some of the meetings of the ranchers up in Montana and in those areas, and, you know, we got met with a lot of resentment and anger, and confusion, and downright fear; and the fear meaning people just didn't understand what it was going to mean to them. And they were going on a photo in their minds, that was given to them by grandpa, dad and grandpa, and on down the line, that wolves are predators, and predators are bloodthirsty, gonna kill everything and anything. And… there are, pretty much, any kind of situation or circumstance that you could visualize in your mind of a wolf doing, I'm sure it's done. And they do eat, and they do kill livestock. There's no doubt about that. But as research goes, and time goes along, they've learned that it's not as excessive... It's not worthy of all the fear that is put into it…So people are creating something to be fearful of, with the wolf – Tracy, M:W Director

We found politically that once the wolves were on the ground… We would do education in a region for a decade prior to reintroduction. And once we got the wolves on the ground, if we went back into the area with the wolves' Program it would stimulate so much conflict, and the media would come in and sensationalize it - that it almost hurt the project. So we would back out for about five years after wolves were living in a region and then once the locals learnt that the deer are still there, and the cows are there, and the kids are in the bus stop, and life goes on, and actually people are now coming to the region to give them money to see wolves! We can go back in, and go "here's how to manage your food, your livestock". Predator conflict resolution programs, or non-lethal control programs – Kent, M:W Director

5.2.2 Ontological dualisms

Mace's (2014) description of the evolution of ontologies of conservation science and practice over the last 60-plus years recognises the premise that 'conservation biology is a mission-driven discipline and is therefore subject to both drift and the periodic adoption of fads and fashions' (2014, p.1558). Given this, she highlights that the notable shifts 'mainly relate to how the relationships between people and nature are viewed' (2014, p.1558). Further, she acknowledges the connection between the ideological and ontological shifts in the goals of conservation, and perception and awareness of the material relations between humans and nonhuman nature.

However, Mace's ontologies all share an implicit separation of humans and nature. This is a 'dualism' that is constructed (it only exists in the thinker's mind), through the performance of

categorical work. That is, an ontological dualism constructing humans and nature as different categories is 'the paradigm out of which the system—its goals, power structure, rules, its culture—arises' (Meadows, 1999). Ison (2018) defines a dualism as being built from negating and antagonistic opposites. Dualities, on the other hand, are complementary, like the wave and the particle that is light, or the predator-prey relationship in nature: they 'belong to two different logical levels, and one emerges from the other' (Ison, 2018: 118) and are 'expressions of a key relationship that gives rise to a dynamic in which the whole is different to the parts' (Ison, 2018: 115). Routley and Routley's (1980) no-reduction position introduced in Chapter 3 makes the same point with regard to their theorisation of moral treatment.

A further illustration of the categorical dualism embedded in much conservation science and practice can be found in the story of human-nonhuman relationships as told through concepts of separation of 'connectedness', i.e., human connection or disconnection with some external 'nature' (Ives et al., 2018). Critical reflection on the use of this framing of connection or disconnection can bring to light questions of how humans operate epistemologically, ontologically, and morally (Midgley & Pinzón, 2013), and the consequences of the performance of such framings and categorical dualisms in conservation decision-making.

The idea of humans being disconnected from nature is salient for many people, but has also been described as oxymoronic (Fletcher, 2017), and as arising out of neoliberal constructions of 'humans' and 'nature' as distinct categories; with nature made up of exchangeable, substitutable, entities, instrumentally valued and beyond moral consideration, rather than as a 'diverse ecology of selves' (Kohn, 2013; Sullivan, 2017). Therefore, thinking with a term like 'human-nature connectedness', presents an ontological and epistemological challenge and opportunity. 'Human-nature connectedness' as a term is itself an example of the naturalised categorical work people constantly do. Examining these categories offers us the chance to consider the dualisms and the dualities and the implied moral obligations of thinking about humans and nature as distinct, connected, or continuous.

Human perceptions of, categorisation of, and modes of interaction with other beings all influence our ideas about what 'ought' to be done with, to, or about these other lives. That is, how we think about ourselves and other beings – for example, as distinct, connected, or continuous – influences how we value and morally account for nonhumans. Animals, especially 'wild' animals, provide a salient example of 'nature' conceptualised as external to and disconnected from humans. We draw arbitrary lines around what should count as morally significant beings (Routley & Routley, 1995); and anthropocentric ideas about ethical obligation and duty intersect with ontological and epistemological projections and perceptions of animal beings (Atterton, 2011; Haraway, 2008).

In an earth we have filled, intra- and interspecies encounters and confrontations cannot be avoided. Attending to we how we want to relate, and how we 'ought' to relate become important

components of coexistence, and of living and dying well in a multispecies world. Can we become response-able in the face of a relationality that does not by default, prioritise us?

5.2.3 'Dreams of mastery and naturalism'

Further discussion of the ontological dualism prevalent in conservation practice can be seen in Lorimer's (2015) analysis in his book *Wildlife in the Anthropocene*, which focuses on the dominance of certain understandings of the human-nature relationship, especially as represented and instantiated by different conservation programs. Lorimer identifies two threads of environmentalism, which he labels the 'dream of mastery', and the 'dream of naturalism':

> *The dream of mastery denies nonhuman claims on the planet, whereas a return to Nature denigrates life forms emergent from and dependent on human care; there is no place for domestic and feral species in the wilderness (Lorimer, 2015: p. 3)*

Lorimer's (2015) argument throughout his book rests on the premise that different modes of conservation literally shape different worlds, by performing particular ideas about what life should be saved. Ideas of 'mastery' led to 'sustainable development' and business-as-usual free-market environmentalism. Ideas of naturalism risk ignoring the multitude of domestic, captive, or managed populations of nonhuman lives. Lorimer argues that modern approaches to environmentalism both justify authoritarian scientific governance and delegitimise alternative ways of knowing and valuing the world. He argues that conceptions of the human-nature relationship are enacted constantly through decisions made in the name of 'conservation' agendas. Mastery and naturalism are each powerful stories, and demonstrate the material consequences of human ideas of nature, of ourselves, and of our relationship.

This is akin to Soper's (1995) analysis (discussed in Chapter 4) of the use of alternative notions of 'human nature' to justify particular social reform agendas: that is, culture as an essential corrective to 'nature', or 'nature' as a release from the repressions or deformations of culture. The fact that a concept of nature can be used in such a contradictory way shows it to be a construction (see Box 12).

I introduced another of Lorimer's (2015) key concepts from his book earlier (see Chapter 2). That is, that a range of 'affective logics' inform decision-makers and practitioners in conservation, and these logics influence how 'problems' are framed and how priorities are set in conservation agendas. To reiterate, for Lorimer (2015), an affective logic describes a habituated mode of engaging with, knowing about, and feeling toward wildlife; these are cultural phenomenon emergent from bodily encounters.

Here Lorimer is articulating the ways conservationists, as individuals, have 'learnt to be affected' by the world, such that they value life the way they do, and that they see certain priorities and activities as acceptable and appropriate. From this premise, Lorimer then argues that conservation proceeds within an 'assemblage', which allows certain actors to speak for, commodify, govern, and thus shape the world, often in conflict with other representations.

I interpret Lorimer's use of 'assemblage' here to correlate with my use of 'boundary infrastructures' in communities of practice. There are multiple ways of being affected by the world, encoded in a range of affective logics, and shared with others through the performance of categories and the formation of boundary infrastructures. Acknowledging the existence of affective logics allows for exploration of the knowledge practices of conservation as experimental (rather than fixed by archetypal ideas of 'nature').

Box 12: Affective logics at play in M:W education program

And I also learned a lot… because I didn't realize how many people were actually interested or like fascinated by large predators. Because of the huge stigma that we've placed on them, and how much hatred you can get from general people. All these people that come here to visit, there's a reason they came here. Whether or not it's just "I want to see a wolf" or "I want to touch a wolf". But, at the end of the day, they love them, and they want to know more about them. Or we get them to want to know more about them. So that's something that I definitely learned while I was here, is the huge interest that people do have in wolves…

It doesn't seem like people are as concerned with coyotes as they are with wolves being present. You know, it's something that terrifies them because it's like "I've seen all those movies… and wolves are bad, they're going to kill you, they're vicious for no reason", and just all this misinformation that they're taught and then they reiterate that to everybody else around them. And it just creates this terrible persona of the Wolf – Tricia, M:W Volunteer

*

When I moved to Colorado the area was so big with so few people… that conservation… people didn't even think about it. You couldn't imagine how disturbing this rock could affect something. Much less… and then of course within, you know, 100 years, what the mines have done; and the logging - it's disrupted a lot of Colorado….

Yes. So, one of the instincts is "being connected to nature". And it's a brutal instinct that everybody wants, and especially the more distant from nature people are, the more effect the wolf has. When we would go to Cape Cod, where they killed all their wolves 200 years ago, people would stand in line by the hundreds, and yell that "they're not leaving until they see a wolf". They don't care if the show is sold out. They don't care if there's no room in the auditorium that's already packed with standing room. They are like "we have to see a wolf". Now at the exact same time, I take the exact same wolf to Utah, to Idaho, to Wyoming, to Montana. And you get people that are so busy trying to kill them to make money, they don't appreciate it. Where when you go to an area where it's gone, humans now have destroyed so much nature... They appreciate it. And our instinct is "I need to be around it". We know it's healthy. We know it provides life. That's guttural. That's a guttural sense I think all humans know. And they see the pictures, if they haven't experienced themselves, of flowing creeks, fish and deer moving around, birds, butterflies. It's all in our dreams. It's all in the ads – Kent, M:W Director

Like Mace (2014), Lorimer also examined the accepted ontologies and epistemologies of different approaches to conservation, but looked across those that exist simultaneously, including approaches focused on rewilding, and ones focused on preservation. His analysis is useful in the context of my argument, as I am trying to not only examine the current status and accepted boundary infrastructures of 'conservation' (and its many permutations), and of nonhuman life,

but to also theorise alternative ways of conceptualising and performing the human-nonhuman relationship. With this in mind I want to now return us to the concept of wildness I touched on briefly in Chapter 4, and discuss the usefulness of thinking about wildness as relational coexistence. I will do this by examining Braverman's study of the ways particular ideas of captivity or wildness are found and performed in conservation agendas and operations.

5.2.4 Wildness as relational coexistence

> *The world is hybrid - neither social nor natural. It is nonlinear rather than in balance. Futures will not be like the past and will be shaped by human action. Multiple natures are possible. Science will be complicit in this modification and is political. There are multiple forms of natural knowledge - not all of which are scientific or even human - informing a myriad discordant ways of living in the world.*
>
> *(Jamie Lorimer, 2015, Wildlife in the Anthropocene, p. 2)*

Lorimer uses the concept of 'hybrid' to articulate an alternative to the ontological dualisms figuring conservation science and practice, and examines the possibility to think 'wild' beyond the dreams of mastery or naturalism.

Beings that overtly exist in the 'in-between', in the liminal spaces between categories can be troubling, and to return to the opening lines of this thesis, I am interested in 'staying with' this trouble. The wolves at Mission: Wolf exist in a liminal space of hybridity that troubles the stories told not only of conservation, but of life itself. Another recent book, *Wild Life: The Institution of Nature*, by Irus Braverman (2015), explores important questions of categorisation through offering an examination of the meaning of 'wildness' in conservation practice, and the consequences of categories, dualisms, and inflexible definitions on the practice of conservation (see Box 13 for M:W experiences of this). This includes the possibilities for reimagining coexistence outside of the accepted definitions of the characters (humans and/or 'nature') and of the relationship.

Box 13: Attitudes to wildness and captivity

All the rest of them looked down at me because I worked with captive wolves. It was literally like "we're the wild wolf people, we're better than you. You're the captive wolf people. You Suck." – Tracy, M:W Director

Yeah. I mean I think that even before I had considered to get into the world of wolf conservation, I knew… or even before I started doing any research… I knew that this was a conflict [between conservationists]. *I didn't know the specifics, or the minutia of it. But yeah definitely. I was aware of that. And I knew that there weren't very many wolves around! I mean, growing up in the Midwest, you know, it's several hours drive*

> *to even be in that sort of environment. And… that was because we had killed them all – Austin, M:W Volunteer*

Braverman is specifically concerned with the dichotomous concepts of *in-situ* (in place) and *ex-situ* (out of place) conservation, and the inherent contradictions of conceptualising 'wildness' and 'nature' in such an absolute, 'in-or-out', frame. Exploring the liminal space between 'in-situ' and 'ex-situ' conservation, as Braverman does, and as I am doing, is important work to destabilise the type of boundary-making that performs and reinforces categories in the first place[2]. Through interviewing over 120 conservation practitioners, as well as through her own observations, Braverman is also offering a description of what it is we think we are doing when we do conservation. Within this, she is careful to point out that simply redefining conservation to remove the dichotomy is not enough: we must examine how this framing of our relationship to nature as being in (captivity) or out (wild) is embedded in our institutions, rhetoric, and practices of conservation.

> *…I wondered what would happen to conservation if idealized notions of nature and captivity - as well as their multiple placeholders - were erased from the conservation lexicon. I proposed that the rationale for distinguishing in situ from ex situ conservation would then cease to exist. With no nature "out there" versus a human world "in here", conservation would need to find more nuanced and dynamic foundations; each recovery effort would be case-specific, as each particular story would depend on myriad interspecies networks and on an open and transparent discussion of what humans are trying to conserve. (Braverman, 2015: p. 225)*

Braverman (2015: p.v225) notes that 'this type of dynamic and relational conservation is already happening', but that 'mainstream conservation discourses lag far behind'. She places this 'dissonance between rhetoric and practice' at the feet of the ideal of 'human versus nature' (Braverman 2015: p. 226). Particularly, she expresses an appreciation for the 'hybrid' that Lorimer notes: that is, her interview participants express themselves with dualistic language, but in practice, undertake activities that are non-dualist.

Braverman also makes a second powerful argument in this book: that the scope of Foucault's biopolitics (introduced briefly in Chapter 3) should include nonhuman animals: 'The shift in conservation from wilderness to wildness can be understood, I argue, as a transition from sovereign power to biopolitics' (Braverman 2015: p. 227). Braverman (2015: p. 230) also discusses the inherent justification of death involved in decisions to 'make live':

> *Conservation focuses on "making live." Less apparent, perhaps, is that within this imperative, conservationists must also determine which life shall be privileged over another, that is then let to die…. All of these stories and so many others justify the deaths of individuals and populations - both in-situ and ex situ in the name of the*

[2] Queer ecology is a related concept and body of work that thoroughly upends efforts to categorise nonhumans just as queer theory has upended stories of human relations. As Timothy Morton (2010: p. 281) says: "Ecology and queer theory are intimate. It's not that ecological thinking would benefit from an injection of queer theory from the outside. It's that, fully and properly, ecology is queer theory, and queer theory is ecology: Queer ecology".

> *survival of the species. These terminal choices made in the name of life are the other, lesser told consequences of conservation's affirmative biopolitics.*

I want to use Braverman's arguments – that conservation can be done (is already being done!) in dynamic and relational ways, and for the application of critical analysis of power and biopolitics in conservation – to support my thesis that coexistence is relational, dynamic reciprocal and participatory. I particularly want to use her discussion of Foucault's biopower and biopolitics to consider the consequences of understanding coexistence as passive, unidirectional 'care'.

Foucault's (1980) thesis of biopower differentiates between the premodern sovereign power as the 'right to decide life and death' (i.e. *make* die, or *let* live) and the later development in capitalist society of the 'power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death' - that is, to govern and administer life, both at the individual level and at the level of the species Foucault 1980), to *make* live, and *let* die. Braverman argues that including nonhuman life in the scope of this biopower is warranted, and 'not only appreciates the entanglements of human and nonhuman, but also recognises their co-production' (Braverman 2015: p. 13). That is, that we are *beings-in-relationship*. Juxtaposing Braverman's and Lorimer's analyses against Mace's ontologies of conservation is useful because the decisions made in the name of 'conservation' – trade-offs justified by the goals and means framed and accepted by each ontology – are, *inherently,* biopolitical (discussed further below.)

Braverman (2015: p. 13) notes that 'in the increasing fluidity between in situ and ex situ management, the question of 'make live' is becoming extremely complex and involves overlapping and contested typologies'. Braverman (2015: p. 13, emphasis in original) uses the concept of 'wild life' to articulate this, drawing out moves in conservation discourses to focus on wildness over wilderness, on 'wild*er* rather than wild*est'*. Notably, the *relationships* between beings, the context, is of importance here: 'conservationists of wildness value life when it is lived in its context, which is understood as constantly evolving' (Braverman 2015: p. 228).

I take Braverman's point here as an elaboration of the importance of relational over categorical thinking, and refer back to the arguments made so far in this thesis about moral considerability, otherness, and response: that is, drawing arbitrary lines around what forms of life should be morally considerable is unwarranted, but treatment can be differential if justifiable/warranted.

5.3 Biopolitics

In this section I will now connect my earlier discussion of categorisation – particularly Bowker and Star's notion of 'boundary infrastructures' – with Mace's (2014) typology of ontologies/ideologies in conservation, Lorimer's explanation of affective logics and assemblages, and Braverman's discussion of wildness, power, and biopolitics in conservation. Brought

together, these are useful tools to consider the consequences of the performance of categories and stories of human-nature relationships and coexistence in the arena of conservation.

Both Braverman and Lorimer are concerned with fundamental questions about the goals, means, and purpose of conservation activity. What is wild 'enough'? How is context accounted for? Can we, without contradiction, account for both individuals and populations? By what ethics?

Mansfield (2016), in reviewing both Braverman and Lorimer's books, notes that Braverman is more ready than Lorimer to say that conservation practice, across both in- and ex-situ conservation, *is* biopolitics, and that calculations involved about what should live and what should die are a core part of the activity of conservation. Different approaches to conservation are committed to different ontological and epistemological accounts of the world, and of relationships. These different approaches pay attention in different ways to whose life *matters:* not just the individual or the population, but *which* individuals, and *which* populations.

That is, 'these calculations are fundamentally about *death'* (Mansfield, 2016: p.109), and are structured by ontologies of nature:

> *…biopolitical decisions are inescapable and cannot be adjudicated based on claims of what is true or right - even if those knowledge claims are post-Natural, non-dualist ones regarding emergence, fluidity, unruliness, and vitality. It is not that non-dualist knowledge claims are haunted and threatened by old biopolitical calculations of life and death, but that biopolitics is embedded in non-dualist knowledge claims regarding unruly vitality (Mansfield, 2016: p. 110).*

And insofar as these calculations are about who should live and who should die, they are also about who should live or not live a *good* life: who should live *well*, and who should die *well* (see Vignette 8 on p. 109 for a story of negotiating life and death at M:W).

5.3.1 Inherent biopolitics

Biermann and Mansfield (2014) present a similar analysis to Mace (2014) of the evolution of conservation ontologies, with the added discussion of relations of power. They highlight the uneasy ethical bedfellows motivating different streams of conservation activity - e.g., protection based on intrinsic value, and protection based on value to (as used by) humans. Biermann & Mansfield (2014: p. 263) make clear the point that conservation is not merely about knowledge, it is specifically focused on using that knowledge to 'effectively *manage* and even *foster* the diversity of life'. Furthermore, they show that 'conservation science is a form of power that generates particular truth claims in the name of fostering life' (2014: p. 269).

Biermann and Mansfield (2014) break conservation down to logics of species, diversity, the ongoingness of life, and the necessity of death. They also use Foucault's (1980) lens of 'biopower' to examine modern conservation. Like Lorimer (2015), Biermann and Mansfield (2014) identify that modern conservation is now 'shaped by a biopolitical logic', and they argue that it is the management of life and death at the level of populations. That is, management is about

generalising rather than individualising. This approach accounts for the rise of legal and governance purview over the lives and bodies of those within the population.

In this way, 'death is transformed into a rate of mortality' (Biermann & Mansfield, 2014: p. 259), making nonhuman lives open to calculation, management, and intervention. A consequence of this shift is that not all life is equally promoted. Biermann and Mansfield (2014: p. 259) thus note that such epistemic and technical approaches, that 'aim to manage, protect, and promote life…. have at their core a profound ambivalence toward life itself'. This is not inherently wrong, but if unconsciously enacted, it is problematic because of the preferential treatment inherent in understanding life as constituting different 'kinds'. Such treatment is arbitrary, often anthropocentric, and when done unconsciously, is not morally defensible (Routley and Routley, 1995). That is, as discussed previously in Chapter 3, Routley and Routley (1980, 1995) make the point that it is *unwarranted* differential treatment that is indefensible. Routley and Routley (1995) take particular issue with the unjustifiability of anthropocentric chauvinistic moral treatment: that is, wolves do not need to be treated morally as people, they can be treated morally as wolves.

Applying a notion of biopower to nonhuman life highlights the messy realities of the material world and requires a reassessment of the logics of our society and actions regarding conservation and management of nature. Biermann and Mansfield (2014: p. 260) argue that such a reassessment challenges the contradictory logics informing conservation decision-making practice, that is:

> *…both the preservationist logic that nature is an inherently valuable external realm that must be protected by humans from humans and the capitalist logic that nature is a set of commodities with exchange value determined by the free market.*

Within this, Biermann and Mansfield (2014) identify a crucial contradiction. On the one hand 'all life' is valued intrinsically. On the other, 'logics of abnormality in conservation science *requires* judgment about what part of nature to make live and what to let die in the name of making live' (Biermann and Mansfield, 2014: p. 269). This biopolitical logic is relied upon to justify both the protection of certain arrangements of life, and their exploitation. However, certainly, as new knowledge develops, the biopolitical logic arrives at different conclusions: Thirty years ago, few cared about conservation of mycorrhizal fungi; now they are recognised as fundamental keystone taxa without which forest ecosystems would not exist (Pouliot, 2018). Thus, although the particular conservation outcome might be different based on the growth in knowledge and understanding, the logic itself has not changed.

Thus, Biermann and Mansfield (2014) end with the distinction that they are not dismissive of conservation approaches that attempt to balance this biopower, rather they are seeking to acknowledge the biopolitics inherent to any conservation activity or approach.

5.3.2 Biopolitics and decision-making in conservation

I am in agreement with Biermann and Mansfield: an acknowledgment of the inherent biopolitics of conservation decision-making is crucial to improving our ability to be response-able, and coexist well, with nonhuman life. To live and die well together.

Humans make decisions all the time that affect the rest of the world: from decisions about what to eat, where to live, and how to move around; to decisions about how to best 'protect' or 'conserve' components of the natural world (See Vignette 8 below for this at play at M:W).

The ways that people use and interact with the nonhuman world often reflect different cultural and personal biases and ontologies that lead to different decisions regarding what should be done in a given situation. Our social institutions (including norms, governance structures, and laws) also reflect these biases ontologies and worldviews. When decisions are made by groups of people – as in conservation institutions or by governments – the categorical boundary infrastructures that are shared within those groups give form to what is accepted as a desirable 'solution'.

The development of conservation science and practice over the last sixty years – from biology to ecology to conservation biology to biodiversity conservation (Foreman, 1999; Mace, 2014) - illustrates paradigmatic changes within the boundary infrastructures that are taken-for-granted. However, the conception of 'nature' as external to human society remains throughout. Push-back against these dualistic categorical tendencies can be found in movements like Deep Ecology (Naess, 1973), the current interest in 'rewilding' (Corlett, 2016; Monbiot, 2013; Moorhouse & Sandom, 2015) 'novel ecosystems' (Collier & Devitt, 2016; Corlett, 2014; Higgs, 2017; Hobbs, Higgs, & Harris, 2009), Anthroecology (Ellis, 2015), and Human Ecology (Boyden, 1987; Boyden & Bontes, 1992; Boyden, Millar, Newcombe, & O'Neill, 1981; Dyball & Newall, 2014). Furthermore, calls to incorporate relational thinking into conservation science and practice are growing (Yunkaporta, 2019).

I take thinkers like Plumwood (1993), Routley (1973), Boyden (1987, 2004, 2016a, 2016b), Ellis (2015), Morton (2012, 2017), Braverman (2015), and Lorimer (2015) to operate from within a perspective of 'we are in the world, we are part of it, and we need to use it', and are reflexive about the relationships of power involved. I am dubbing all these perspectives as relational. These thinkers question the moral, ethical, and practical implications of our decisions in this enmeshed world. This perspective is a conscious examination of the biopolitics of human existence.

Vignette 8: Feeding carnivores

There were two old horses that lived at the sanctuary, alongside the wolves. They were retired there, one taken in after a hard life as a cowpony, the other rescued from a situation of neglect. Grinder and Blackjack. Neither were specimens of prime equine grace or beauty. But they were loved, and cared for, and treated with respect.

But as the years crept on, their health declined, and the question began to come to the fore: when is it time to call time on an ageing animal? How can we tell if their

suffering is too much? What does it mean to make a decision on their behalf about their quality of life?

And that is exactly what we had to consider, as a group of volunteers dedicated to the care of these animals, both equine and canine. When is enough, enough? What factors should be considered in the weighing of a life?

A vet was consulted, for an "expert opinion". They agreed there was pain present in both animals. A group discussion was had, where everyone had an opportunity to state their perspective, and beliefs, and what they thought should or shouldn't happen. Ultimately, though it wasn't a consensus-based process. A decision was made. They should both be "let go".

But at this place, that meant something more than it might ordinarily. Because the wolves needed to be fed. And 2000lbs of meat was not going to be wasted. So, letting them go meant cutting them up and feeding them out. And everyone who participated in the decision process around their death knew that. Knew the full equation and accepted it.

What is the lesson here? Was this decision made ethically?

I include this vignette to illustrate the processes of consideration and deliberation valued at the wolf sanctuary, the weighing up of rights and wrongs, the making explicit of the relational context of the lives being considering. Simple calculation can be thoughtless and unconscious: and abdicating responsibility for making a decision, for being a response-able participant in the relationship in question, is not a solution. In a full earth, response-ability is a reciprocal, if asymmetrical, component of living and dying well together.

Now is also an opportune moment to acknowledge the complexity of using a sanctuary as the case-study through which to discuss concepts of biopower and biopolitics. Dynamics of power of course permeate human-nonhuman relationships at sanctuaries just as they do at any other site where we encounter each other. I have not focused my discussion in this thesis on questions of power, partly because this work has been done fantastically already in the powerful book *Saving Animals: Multispecies Ecologies of Rescue and Care* by Elan Abrell (2021), but also because I was curious to explore relationships not dominated or bound by considerations of power. I wanted to see what else matters in the lived experiences of coexistence.

5.3.3 Nature made meaningful

With this perspective then, what can be said about the purpose of 'nature conservation' as a human endeavour?

According to (Deliege, 2016), underlying several apparently diverse perspectives on the management of nature is a common outlook. He says this common outlook describes nature preservation as a 'primarily interpretive act', aimed at 'the preservation of meaning by establishing a successful contact with an external reality': Nature conservation, or preservation, is, in this reading, an act in 'response to nature's meaning' (Deleige 2016: p. 409). Thus, articulating the ways that we make nature meaningful is an important activity when considering the biopolitical decision made in the name of nature conservation. Considering what trade-offs

we are making in the name of which versions of 'nature' is not just about what we think valuable but also what we think meaningful and ontologically recognisable.

Deleige is referring to the debate, more common in Europe, between those who think that 'nature' is best when minimally interfered with (or created by) humans; and those who argue that landscapes, and especially European agricultural landscapes, are already heavily human-mediated, and have been for centuries, are also 'natural'. Each of these camps, as Deleige puts it, are making a meaningful claim about what 'real' nature is. Deleige is careful to explain that by 'meaning' he intends 'relevance' - why things 'matter'.

Recognition is a key concept here. Deleige is arguing that meaning is mediated by external reality, because to recognise or be recognised requires an interaction. i.e., relations…a relationship. This connects to my articulation of new materialism from Chapter 4 – that is, that we are *beings-in-relationship*. Meaning is only made through interaction/relationship with the other. Meaning requires context, it requires contact. Haraway (2008) similarly captures this with the concept of an 'encounter at the contact zone': the interaction (encounter) between beings at the contact zone becomes meaningful *through* the interaction.

But Deleige (2016: p. 414) is also careful to point out that in this sense-making, 'meaning can always be denied':

> *Indeed, the reality towards which we are oriented in our quest for meaning and with which we hope to establish contact is only really external to our desires if it can negate those desires and resist full appropriation. It is only when our quest for meaning can be denied by the reality towards which we are oriented, that we know we are oriented towards a reality that is truly external to us. The presence of meaning is thus premised on the possibility of its counterpart: the denial of meaning.*

This is especially relevant to any discussion of the relationship between human and nonhuman life - because our assumptions, expectations, and actions can always be denied by the reality of (the experiencing self of) the other being. Our management 'interventions' rely, at least to some extent, on the participation of the other beings, and most of our scientific enquiry in conservation is, arguably, focused on improving our knowledge about that nonhuman participation.

Haraway (2008: p. 206) discusses this in the context of categorisation and domestication:

> *Many critical thinkers who are concerned with the subjugation of animals to the purposes of people regard the domestication of other sentient organisms as an ancient historical disaster that has only grown worse with time. Taking themselves to be the only actors, people reduce other organisms to the lived status of being merely raw material and tools. …One being becomes means to the purposes of the other, and the human assumes rights in the instrument that the animal never has an "it"self. One can be somebody only if someone else is something. To be animal is exactly not to be human and vice versa.*

Many a dog owner, farmer, rancher, wildlife manager, or medical researcher knows that nonhuman participation can be withdrawn, with often disastrous consequences. The dog bites the

owner, the flock of sheep knock the fence down and escape to greener pastures, the invasive species immediately recolonises, and the microbe mutates. Nonhuman acquiescence – e.g., in conforming to our expectations, doing what they're 'supposed' to do and staying where they're 'supposed' to stay – is a large part of how we get along in the world. Our past experiences, and the relationships of power that we reinforce, have facilitated specific lifeworlds and relationships: but these can always be resisted, refused, or denied altogether. Most diseases are unwanted non-human participation.

Considering nonhuman participation in the context of the interpretive act that is conservation leads one to question whose interpretation it is that is taken for granted? Returning to Haraway's concept of the encounter at the contact zone as a constitutive process in the human-nonhuman relationship, these ideas of participation and adaptation are important and relevant to meaning-making in conservation. Haraway (2008: p. 262) thus goes on to consider the possibilities (and realities) of human and nonhuman co-adaptation:

> *I must adapt to the specific animals even as I work for years to learn to induce them to adapt to me and my artefacts in particular kinds of knowledge projects. Specific sorts of animals in specific ecologies and histories make me adapt to them even as their life doings become the meaning-making generator of my work.*

Haraway (2008: pp. 262-3) also emphasises that our coadaptation will be 'mutual but unidentical', as we are enmeshed in both meaning-making labour, and play, by the 'material-semiotic requirements of getting on together in specific lifeworlds':

> *They touch; therefore they are. It's about the action in contact zones. That's the kind of insight that makes us know that situated human beings have epistemological-ethical obligations to the animals. Specifically, we have to learn who they are in all their nonunitary otherness in order to have a conversation on the basis of carefully constructed, multisensory, compounded languages.*

This point connects to Levinas' (1981) theory of otherness as the root of moral obligation, and my inquiry in this thesis into an understanding of what 'coexistence' means and why it matters. With whom are we coexisting? How are our adaptations reciprocal, participatory, inequal, fraught? What actions or interactions are morally warranted and which are not? How is the inequal nature of our responsibilities accounted for? Can these lessons be transferred across categorical boundaries? See Box 14 for some examples from M:W of extending these ideas.

Box 14: Non-unitary otherness, and looking beyond wolf-human relationships

They're not a static creature. They're not this "oh, it's going to eat this, it's going to go here, it's going to have puppies here at this den, or whatever". They're just mind-bogglingly… extreme animal. Extreme cases of wolves… like a lone wolf taking down a moose, or a wolf that has a dozen different mates, and has sired a half …like 40 or 50 pups. So just learning about the extremes of their experiences. And that as much as we know. I mean, they're one of the most highly studied creatures in the world today, and that it's still surprising us – Austin, M:W Volunteer

I would love to start something like this but it's just… it's daunting, you know, there is a hill, and then from the hill you create something like this... But it's like, over time, you

start with the tiny shack, and then you build into things like the… South facing windows and having greenhouses. All of that is something that…. If it's done well, makes the part where people come and learn - so much more possible…Because you're not freezing to death in the winter. So, it's just… it's like how the physical environment contributes to that educational aspect – M:W Visitor

[the education program] is confirming some of my beliefs that you know: we're not so different. Us and them, being like wolves, or any other animal or creature really. So, it's really just finding the importance of a quality of life and preserving that no matter what – CB, M:W Volunteer

5.3.4 Moral response-ability in conservation/Dying Well

I relay the above discussions and conclusions of Mansfield, Biermann and Mansfield, and Deleige, because I connect their points about meaning-making and biopolitics in conservation science and practice to my discussion of human-nonhuman coexistence, especially the topics of categorisation and story I've so far presented. That is, the ways that human meaning-making and power interacts with nonhuman agency and participation in the conservation space is a fascinating arena to think through ideas of responsibility, encounter, and relationality. This discussion of biopolitics allows me to maintain a focus on the material consequence of human ideas about nonhuman life, and why it matters that we live and die well/why it matters that we move to a more biosensitive human-nonhuman relationship.

I want to be clear here to articulate that I do not mean living and dying well in a prescriptive or static sense. Living and dying well means being explicit about what is involved in the making live and letting die, or letting live and making die, that is inherent to conservation decision-making and practice.

The below quote (see Box 15) connects my points here to my earlier discussion (Chapter 3) about the historical debates of moral obligation, and the commitment of many ethical frameworks to the maximization of value. Kent's comment here further articulates my point about warranted and unwarranted differential treatment, in a moral sense. My argument is not for any kind of absolutism in regards to the moral good, it is for the conscious and explicit acknowledgement of the ongoing negotiation inherent to life in a world full of other beings, and the need for more skilfulness in recognising and negotiating those moral relationships.

Box 15: The 'trauma' of predation

Mission Wolf does not teach about the trauma of predation. We get animals that have died naturally. Animals that are injured, animals that are already dead, or were hit by a car. And we process those animals and we throw bite sized chunks, and we watch the wolves inhale it and we're all impressed.

When you watch a Wolf chase a beautiful deer, and catch it, and make it scream, and kill it and eat it while it's still moving. That is traumatic. And I don't think any of the Mission Wolf people or many of the biologists prior to putting wolves in Yellowstone really grasped what that was like until they got wolves on the ground, and they got a whole team of them.

> *And guess what we get to do all day. Watch wolves shred animals. And yes, that elk was old and it went down fast. That was OK. But that one it just couldn't run, and it didn't want to go down. They can see animals from a distance. Predation is harsh. But, you know, we do it in our gardens with our broccoli. It's life. We all need to eat. And so that's the one side of Mission Wolf… We do show that death creates life by feeding out dead animals that people handle, but we really don't show that side of predation - Kent, M:W Director*

My reason for including Kent's quote here is to emphasise that a notion of dying well, as a recognition of death as a significant contribution to the overall ongoingness of life, does not need to parade the trauma of predation, nor obscure the realities of the corporeal processes of consumption and decomposition, to contribute to improving our skilfulness in recognising and negotiating moral relationships. Walking this line was an ongoing part of the life and death realities of the Mission: Wolf sanctuary (see also Vignette 8: Feeding carnivores on p.109)

5.4 *Carnivore Conservation and the* Stories we tell stories with

Having discussed the role of categorisation, biopolitics, and meaning-making in conservation broadly, I now want to narrow in further on a realm of conservation particularly relevant to notions of coexistence – carnivore conservation – mainly because this is the field where that concept is being actively used. I will do this by first contextualising carnivore conservation in an ontology of conservation, and then discussing the biopolitical consequences of that ontology, and the emergence of ideas of coexistence as a response to those consequences.

Pressure from climate change and other anthropogenic modifications to the natural environment are threatening the status of carnivore populations around the world (Ripple et al. 2014). As knowledge is increasing about the trophic interactions between predator and prey populations, interest in conserving top-order carnivores is likewise increasing (Ripple et al. 2014). These tensions are manifesting in some places in increasing interactions between carnivores and humans (Lozano et al., 2019), increased perception of threat (to lives, and livelihoods) (Carmi & Kimhi, 2015), and increased human-human conflict over how to deal with this (Pooley et al., 2016). Wolves in North America and Europe and dingoes in Australia are both representative of these tensions.

Both conservation and control efforts can be costly, especially where conflict over the best approach is present. They can sometimes contradict or detract from efforts in other important areas such agriculture production; are not necessarily effective at their intended goal; and can be ethically questionable (Blackwell et al., 2016; Lute, Carter, López-Bao, & Linnell, 2018; van Eeden et al., 2017). Understanding these issues and contradictions, the assumptions underpinning them, and methods of resolving them, may lead to complementary actions that benefit both agricultural and conservation purposes, and lead to more ecologically rational and ethically responsible outcomes.

Ripple et al.'s (2014) extensive review of the 'Status and Ecological Effects of the World's Largest Carnivores' examined the ecological function of, and threats to, 31 of the largest mammalian carnivores around the world. Of these, they documented trophic effects for 7, including wolves and dingoes. This meant that they found 'significant, cascading trophic interactions' such that these species 'clearly have cascading influence on ecological communities and ecosystems' through direct and indirect effects (Ripple, Beschta, & Painter, 2015: p. 1). They further argue that the loss of these carnivores across global ecosystems will have an unwanted impact on biodiversity and ecological processes and functioning, and by extension, human society, and well-being. This reasoning reflects Mace's (2014) ontologies of nature in the forms *nature for people*, and *nature and people*.

Thus, while acknowledging that more knowledge is needed about the trophic interactions and effects of large carnivores, Ripple et al. (2014) still argue that trophic interactions are the main ecological basis for doing carnivore conservation. Given that protected areas will not be able to achieve the level of conservation they see necessary, Ripple et al. (2014) then further acknowledge that understanding and facilitating human coexistence with these animals will be crucial to large-carnivore conservation success.

Ripple et al. (2014) make the claim made at the end of their article that 'large-carnivore conservation might also be seen as a moral obligation - the recognition of the intrinsic value of all species' (Ripple et al., 2014: p. 9). This moral claim, given as a concluding remark about the importance of this category of animal to the ongoingness of life on earth, is an ontological and ethical claim about what assemblages and relationships ought to exist.

I will return to this claim momentarily, but first I want to return briefly to the topic of categorisation, taking it to the deepest level that I intend to go, and discuss with specific reference to canines.

5.4.1 Categorisation and canines

The case of wolves (*Canis lupus*) and dogs (*Canis familiaris*) offers interesting insight into the functions and consequences of categorical work performed by humans in their relationships with nature, and the evolution of stories of human-nonhuman relationship. Not only do humans interpret their relationships with wolves and dogs differently depending on their perceptions and cultural appreciations of each, but different constructions of the predator – as a 'cultural animal' – influence perceptions of responsibility and the causality of positive and negative interactions (Pooley *et al*., 2017: p. 517). Furthermore, as discussed in the Introduction to this thesis (see Chapter 1), wolves and dogs, particularly in America, share a hybrid and convoluted history.

The ancestry of wolves and dogs has a debated history (Perri, 2016) and their definitions as separate species are blurred (Vilà et al., 1997). A common story is that dogs are descended from wolves, although this is now debated in scientific circles. Their study reflects broader conceptual boundaries in conservation science, that is, boundary infrastructures of wild or domestic.

However, the categories of wolf and dog offer many commonly salient (though not necessarily accurate) distinctions (Lescureux & Linnell, 2014). Wolves are wild, dogs are domesticated. Wolves are predators, dogs are pets. Wolves are scary, dogs are tame. Wolves will eat you; dogs will lick you. The salience of this distinction belies its construction…. We only have to consider that far more humans are killed annually by dogs than by wolves!

Which meaning we apply to a category depends on what kind of thing we hold as the exemplar of that category; that is, which properties or characteristics are central and salient for that category (Lakoff, 1987). Obviously, the above descriptions are simplifications, but that is almost the point. Labelling an animal as one or the other enables a simplistic list of definitions and expectations to be attached to them. These are the heuristics with which we rationalise our everyday actions and existence (Bruers, 2013). Furthermore, conservation practice and policy struggles to deal with parts of nature that don't fit neatly into these categories, that are hybrid (Lorimer, 2016; Braverman, 2015; Fredriksen, 2016; Kimball, 2016). When red wolves interbreed with coyotes, are they different species? Or is 'red wolf' a misnomer originally anyway, and they were basically coyotes all along anyway? (Flores, 2016; vonHoldt et al., 2016).

This messy categorical situation was prevalent at Mission: Wolf. An emergent theme from my data focused on the meanings and distinctions associated with wolves and dogs as embodied components of 'nature', including ideas of 'wildness', 'autonomy', and 'agency', and assumed expectations of behaviour. I analysed how visitors' projections and categorical paradigms – and the stories associated with them – were confronted by the reality of an animal, neither wolf nor dog. Further, I asked whether such a confrontation over categorisation of a component of nature also required reflection on their relationship to that component of 'nature'. Return to Box 1 on p. 48 for quotes from M:W illustrating these tensions, and see Box 16 below for some of the assumption visitors arrived with (note the use of dog to describe both continuity and difference with wolves).

Box 16: Wolf or Dog?

These are some of the responses by visitors to the initial survey questionnaire (see Appendix 4: Preliminary Questionnaire for full list of information gathered)

- They are predators; they live in packs

- Powerful, fierce predators

- Apex predators with a bad reputation, tend to be reclusive

- Big, more aggressive dogs

- A large mammal, smart, looks like a dog. They eat cattle sometimes

- A big dog/dog ancestor that lives in packs and hunt elk

- A carnivorous mammal that lives in packs, wolves are the ancestors of dogs, hunt elk and other herbivores, and almost always avoid people

- *Pack animals; carnivores; largest dog breed*

Categories offer us scripts that we use to understand how and why an animal is doing what it does; and when it breaks these boundaries, we are confronted (Lescureux & Linnell, 2014). When dogs behave aggressively or unpredictably, we call them 'wild'; when wolves are seen playing with sticks in the forest, we call them 'cute'. Examples like this allow us to reflect on the boundaries, and the boundary infrastructures, around that category that we have taken for granted. The unconscious performance of those categories and boundary infrastructures can have consequences for the nonhuman lives caught up in the in-between.

5.4.2 Biopolitical Consequences

Large carnivores, along with other megafauna, are the subjects, beneficiaries and victims of decisions and interventions concerning the desired arrangements of life and land. These kinds of animals usually need vast territories, though this is not always the case. A well-known example of intervening in the system in the name of carnivore conservation and ecological restoration is the Yellowstone wolf reintroductions undertaken in the USA in 1995 and 1996 (Phillips & Smith, 1997; Ripple, Beschta, & Painter, 2015). This intervention was enacted following decades of lobbying by conservationists and contributed, along with strengthened legal protections and improved social licence, to the recovery of wild wolf populations in the USA. Their current status is not without controversies, but their numbers have nevertheless increased.

However, wolves, along with other predators, do not abide by another example of human categorical work. The arbitrary metaphorical lines on maps that people use to distinguish different land- 'uses' and 'properties' are reflective of the same paradigm that constructs parts of nature as separate entities. When animals move from 'protected areas' to 'private properties', there is a greater likelihood of human-wildlife interactions, often problematically framed as 'conflict' (Frank, 2016). As predator populations increase, and we continue spreading our settlement into their spaces, the interface between humans and wildlife thus increases (Boitani & Linnell, 2015). This can also lead to human-human conflict, as groups within society disagree about how best to deal with the issue, from the scale of local clashes between farmers and environmentalists, to conflicts at the national and international scale over, for example, 'endangered species' protection and national policy (Pooley et al., 2017).

Human-human conflict more generally, over rights and resources, also interferes with conservation activities, and occasionally finds particular expression in retaliation to carnivore presence (Chapron & López-Bao, 2014). In some places, beyond economic impacts, predators may represent the most violent interactions farmers or ranchers come up against in their struggle to negotiate their identity and role as a farmer (Burton & Wilson, 2006). Rather than confronting the systemic and embedded nature of their true problematic, such as a socio-economic system that does not support their industry, agriculturalists may see the carnivore as an easy locus on which

to place the blame for their problems; a scapegoat through which to express their frustration and perceived powerlessness (Chapron & López-Bao, 2014, referring particularly to European contexts). This extends to assignations of 'ownership' and responsibility between different groups of people or institutions, both for the animal's behaviour, and for responding to it (Pooley et al., 2017).

Geographically and culturally, there are different things happening around the world with regards to carnivore conservation and human-carnivore coexistence. In Europe, with large human population densities, and small amounts of land set aside as 'nature reserves' (small in total, though large (21%) as a relative proportion of European land (EEA, 2016)), there is yet still a remarkable recovery in both herbivore and carnivore populations, assisted by the abandonment of agricultural land (Boitani & Linnell, 2015; Navarro & Pereira, 2012). This experience offers an intriguing question for other contexts such as America and Australia, with their predominantly 'land-sparing' approaches to conservation, with 'wilderness' areas set aside, and human access restricted (Foreman, 1999; Kremen, 2015). Can the lessons in coexistence emerging from the European context be transferred to the more sparsely populated terrains of the USA and Australia? For example, a recent assessment by van den Bosch et al. (2022) noted that about 65% of gray wolf historic range in the eastern USA is now unsuitable. And what might these have to say for places like, for example, India, South-East Asia, and Africa, where different histories and tensions exist between human and wildlife populations?

For large carnivores, interactions with agriculture are a key facet of their interactions with humans. One of the long debates in conservation spaces has been around 'land-sparing' vs 'land-sharing' activities (Kremen, 2015). These debates focus not only on ecological arguments around functions and the necessities of life, but also have associated ethical and political questions. For example, the creation of protected areas in developing countries has been dubbed 'fortress conservation' for its imposition of developed world (/colonial) ideals onto developing country contexts, resulting in the removal of many people from their previously intimately environmentally integrated 'natural' lives…. to only then offer the possibility of 'reconnection' (for the wealthy few) through ecotourism ventures (Fletcher 2016).

Similarly, advocates like Monbiot (2013) that argue vehemently for the restoration of wilderness as in 'self-willed nature' (as in exclusive of human will) again problematically erase the ongoing cultural and material connections between indigenous peoples and nature/nonhuman life. Such a conception of nature and nonhuman life is often reflective of a colonialist perspective, and fits Mace's (2014) ontology of *nature despite people.* Valuing one type of arrangement of human and nonhuman life can devalue others, including First Nations peoples' ongoing relationships with land (space/place/time). It can also fundamentally preclude (or even exclude) coexistence: it is absent of the exact human-nonhuman relational thinking I am arguing for here.

On this point, Stuart (2014) offers a detailed analysis of the challenges and importance of retaining agricultural land for the future health of the planet and human societies – an opportunity

also, perhaps, to reframe the relationship between ‘domestic’ and ‘wild’. Stuart (2014) argues that the ‘ecological functionality’ of an ecosystem must account for the productivity needs of human food systems. Instead of focusing on doing either food production or wildlife conservation, he argues, perhaps both can be achieved to a degree of ‘enough’. This aligns with Dryzek’s (1982) articulation of ecological rationality and human productivity as incompatible with exclusionary conservation practices modelled on removing human ‘interference’. That is, while the protective and waste assimilative aspects of anthropocentric ecological rationality may be best served by leaving nature well alone, the productive aspects will not be. Production for human use demands artificial suppression of ecological succession (Dryzek, 1982, p.45). Agriculture is important both for producing food, but also for maintaining ecological process, and providing ecosystem services to counteract our urban-industrial system (Stuart 2014). If we allow agricultural land to be taken from production - whether that is for urban-industrial development, or to be turned into 'wilderness', we all lose in the end too (i.e., food security etc etc). How we do agriculture and conservation on the same land is thus important. And how we understand wildness within this will be crucial to the continuance of many lifeforms.

Conservation in areas with minimal human interference is important, but in areas where that is impossible, it is still possible to achieve a dynamic and ecologically resilient system: if 'coexistence' is taken as the goal; that is, the goal becomes a ‘dynamic and active relationship’ between humans and wildlife (Boitani and Linnell 2012). A proactive, adaptive response to changing global and local contexts, rather than a retrospective, potentially stagnant, ‘ideal’ of ‘pristine’ nature, and an agriculture ‘unfettered’ by wildlife.

Additionally, although the abandonment of agricultural land that is occurring in Europe and some parts of America and Australia does provide opportunity for the restoration of wilderness habitat, if the adjacent agricultural producers are unwilling to coexist with wildlife when it crosses over that (sometime physical, sometimes invisible) line, then the overall potential outcome is compromised.

Human perceptions, ideas, categorisations, and ontologies of animals, influence what is seen as a desirable management intervention, and which lives and what relationships are valued, and why and how they are valued. Examples can be seen in the controversies over the hybridisation of red wolf (*Canis rufus)*, gray wolf (*Canis lupus)*, and coyote (*Canis latrans)* and associated conservation efforts in the USA (Braverman, 2015; Morell, 2016). Similarly, the dingo in Australia faces constant investigation about it origins and hybridity with wild dogs, a categorisation with clear consequence for the employment of lethal control measures (Cairns, Nesbitt, Laffan, Letnic, & Crowther, 2020; van Eeden, Newsome, Crowther, Dickman, & Bruskotter, 2020). Further, cognitive associations based on categorisation can influence what knowledge is accepted as part of the decision context (Lakoff, 1987).

5.4.3 Constructions of Coexistence in Carnivore Conservation

Carnivore control and conservation is thus an example of how conservation ideologies and ontologies frame practice. As mentioned earlier, carnivore conservation is a rich context to explore ideas of coexistence with nonhuman life, partly because 'coexistence' is a framing used commonly in that field of study and practice. Responses to (perceived or actual) interactions with predators seems to result in one of two paradigms: 1) Control – efforts are made to modify the behaviour of the 'problematic' predator, for example, by killing or removing them; or 2) Coexistence – efforts are made to modify human behaviour to deal with the 'new' context, for example, changes to animal husbandry techniques, infrastructure, or type of enterprise (Dorresteijn, Milcu, Leventon, Hanspach, & Fischer, 2016; Frank, 2016; Inskip, Carter, Riley, Roberts, & MacMillan, 2016; Skupien, Andrews, & Larson, 2016)

Part of the coexistence paradigm, so framed, involves reaching an appreciation of human societies', and individual's, ability and willingness to modify their behaviour to coexist with predators. Encouraging individuals and societies to explore this approach necessitates both an understanding of the behaviour and ecology of the predator in question, and an understanding of how individuals (and societies) interpret and negotiate that knowledge into their frameworks of rationality and decision-making.

Pooley et al. (2017, p. 2) provided an extensive review of current approaches to 'understanding and mitigating adverse human-carnivore encounters'. Their interdisciplinary team was interested in how human-predator conflicts might be reduced, but also, more broadly, in how such conflicts were framed, and with what consequences for how 'solutions' were designed and implemented. What important underlying drivers of conflict might be obscured? In the language of this thesis, Pooley et al. seem to be interested in what stories the story of human-predator relationships was told with. Importantly they recognised that without such a deeper level examination, even the most well-intentioned efforts would ultimately fail to reduce human-wildlife conflict.

Pooley et al (2017) highlight that human-wildlife relations do not exist independently of human-human relations, where conflict between groups of people with different goals and tolerances for wildlife is more problematic than the actual human-wildlife interactions themselves. Further, they identify three key assumptions in much of the framing of human-predator conflicts by managers and ecologists:

- that the level of damage from predation is directly related to the level of conflict;
- that the level of conflict elicits a response proportional to the level of damage; and
- that mitigation activities appropriate to the level of conflict and damage will lead to proportional increases in support for conservation.

These assumptions frame how the 'problem' is perceived, and thus what solutions are proposed and implemented. Strategies such as lethal control; removal of 'problem animals',

technical fixes, and behavioural advice are focused primarily on modifying the actions and behaviour of the predator. Other strategies, such as local community education on the effectiveness of methods such as guardian dogs for reducing attacks, are working on adapting human activities to predator presence and behaviour.

However, what these practical strategies miss are the attitudinal and affective components of how human-wildlife relations are framed and understood. Perceptions of damage are often disproportionate to material/measurable impacts, and attribution of responsibility carries political undertones.

In response to these identified issues, Pooley et al (2017) offer a range of interventions that can be conceptualised as 'transitions' in framing, or 'reframings'. These include (in my words):

- reframing from human-wildlife 'conflict' to 'relations' (including addressing 'conflict legacies' and 'cultures of conflict' (concepts from social identity theory (Colvin, Witt, & Lacey, 2015));
- reframing 'problem' interactions to 'facts-of-life' (this includes addressing the illusion of control);
- shifting the focus from control to co-adaptation (including the relationship between 'tolerance' and animal behaviour – that is, that behaviour can differ between individuals within a species and across locations, and is partly product of the specific interactions (encounters and relationships) between those humans and nonhumans);
- highlighting the connections between commodification, charisma, politics, and 'conflict'.

Pooley et al. (2017: p 516) also draw attention to the political aspects of the context, referencing Adams (2015) to make the point that 'both conservationists and local communities create and enforce the kinds of human-predator relations' desired. These political aspects include laws and regulations and associated penalties (fines or recompense); however, they are less likely to take the form of overt political pressure or lobbying (Scott, 2020), and more usually emerge as illegal killing of predators - where the predator becomes a symbol (and scapegoat) for other discontents (Chapron & López-Bao, 2014; von Essen & Allen, 2015).

Pooley et al (2017) further note that the 'real' animal cannot be separated from the 'cultural animal' in that the constructions of the animal have material and philosophical consequences. This includes the attribution of causality and/or responsibility, and the difference in perception based on differing resilience (Pooley et al., 2017: p. 11):

> *The diverse ways in which particular societies, communities, or individuals think about and respond to such culturally important animals can't be solely explained through quantitative social sciences approaches focusing on measuring attitudes and behaviour. These approaches typically disaggregate people into socio-economic groups like commercial farmers, communal farmers, pastoralists, agriculturalists, hunters, and other livelihood-oriented descriptions. This lumping by likelihood group results in analyses which miss some striking cultural differences.*

Disaggregating perspectives based on broad categories of socio-economic groups like this demonstrates the material and moral consequences of thinking about nature and nonhuman life in different ways. Grouping by attitude or vulnerability, would probably reveal interesting differences (von Essen & Allen, 2015).

The fact that people's response to living alongside predators differs over the predator's range, and across different groups of people signifies that there is no single answer. Pooley et al. (2017: p. 15) go on:

> *Approaches currently prevalent in conservation research do not adequately capture the complexities of human-predator interactions. Researchers are just beginning to think more rigorously about 'coexistence' and 'co-adaptation' actually mean (Carter & Linnell 2017). However, work in animal studies, anthropology, environmental history, and geography has sought to develop new ways of conceptualising human-animal relationships, and new approaches for studying them, which could usefully be applied in conservation.*

They offer a comprehensive description and analysis of the complexities of human-predator relations, highlighting many of the nuances of definition/construction, attributions of responsibility and management, and possibilities for co-existence and co-adaptation. However, what their paper notably avoids is an explicit consideration of the moral frameworks and ontologies within which human-predator relations are understood, and within which biopolitical decisions about nonhuman life and death are made across scales of human organisation. The authors indicate that conservation science is only one 'voice' among many, including larger processes involving moral and political arguments, and posit that, 'ideally', conservation science research 'should reflect this'. They blame the drive for 'win-win' solutions for the limited focus given in conservation contexts to these 'important, deep, and long-running underlying drivers of conflicts' including the dynamics of 'power, vulnerabilities, and values' that impact the 'success' of conservation efforts (Pooley et al. 2016: p.20).

Carter and Linnell (2016: p. 576) articulate this well:

> *A variety of measures exist to reduce impacts on humans of having large carnivores in shared landscapes…. While these measures can be useful, our concept of coexistence suggests that they should be supplemented with interventions that address the human and ethical facets more directly, such as efforts to engage diverse stakeholder groups, build trust and dialog between groups of humans with different viewpoints toward carnivores, or the adoption of novel decision-making structures that ensure participation and legitimacy.*

Through both the small empirical case-study reported here, and the further philosophical and moral exploration it inspired, I have aimed to address both the reframings Pooley et al. (2016) identify, and the examination of ontology and morality they omit. These components are, I would argue, crucial to the further and difficult work needed to get to a construction of coexistence that both describes and shapes a worthwhile future reality.

5.5 Conclusion – Living and Dying Well Together

With this thesis, I am exploring the question of what it means and why it matters that we coexist well with other beings. I am arguing that there is a lot more scope for negotiation with nonhumans than is recognised or allowed for in the stories of relationship and associated practices of nature and nonhuman 'management'. These stories and practices form the default settings for relationships across a significant portion of human-nonhuman dynamics and interactions. They are significant because of the interconnected web of multispecies life, such that intervention in the realm of, say, dingo management through 1080 poison baiting, has repercussions both up and down the food chain, and out through human social circles due to the power of the categories and stories repeatedly performed in those management decisions. Actions like baiting wild dogs become unquestioned, replicated and self-reinforcing withing the COP, such that questioning from 'outside' (by other human groups) of these premises is framed as conflict. Furthermore, such actions deny or downgrade the moral relationship that exists between significant others, of any species.

This chapter has articulated the plurality of ontologies figuring conservation science and practice, and examined the connections between the performance of categorical work that is done through our affective logics, and the enaction of boundary infrastructures through biopolitical decision-making for the sake of conservation. I have illustrated how this applies to the case of carnivore conservation generally, and canine conservation specifically. I have also explored the current framings and critiques of the use of a concept of 'coexistence' in these spaces.

My aim with this thesis is partly to offer a construction of coexistence that connects with Boyden's concepts of biounderstnading and biosensitivty, and in pursuit of that I have led you through a consideration of many concepts, applied here in this chapter through the example of conservation and specifically carnivore conservation. The point I am making here is that we seem to have little to no problem attributing beliefs, intentions, and motivations to nonhumans. Understanding that these are attributes of living selves opens the door to appreciating the 'face' and significant otherness of nonhuman beings, and the importance of considering beings through their relational contexts, rather than their properties.

Considering our moral relationship with nonhumans requires considering that there are broader possibilities for response, negotiation, and adaptation between species/between beings. Furthermore, this is neither an issue of moral absolutism or moral relativism; the pitfalls of both will need to be reconciled in any accounting of the ongoing negotiation, mediation, and compromise involved in the 'always already happening' interaction between human and nonhuman life. This will involve the need to reflect on, create, and amplify alternative ways of thinking to foreground the morality of decisions and remain open to those possibilities. This might mean alternative categorisations, boundary infrastructures, and, ultimately, stories of relationship. It will also mean improving our response-ability and recognition of the relationality of all beings.

Although most human cultures saliently conceptualise humans and nonhumans as different categories, they don't necessarily construct the same ontological dualism around that relationship (Mathews, 2004). To me, acknowledging the existence of alternative ways of thinking brings an opportunity to rethink the ontological commitments driving conservation science and practice. This point connects with the concepts of performative new materialism and beings-in-relationship I introduced earlier (see Chapter 4). That is, it is not about reconciling the biocentric, ecocentric, or anthropocentric ethical ontologies underpinning different conservation agendas, nor picking one to consider 'correct'. Rather, moral decision-making involves: i) recognising the context and relationships within which ethical decisions are made, including that the human decision-maker cannot be thought of as outside that system, ii) appreciating the role of boundary infrastructure in performing and perpetuating dualistic categories in the construction of human-nonhuman relationships, and iii) reflecting on and making explicit the justification being used to make the decision.

Thinking like this does not 'freeze' a decision-maker into inaction: it is about consideration of the relationships that exist with other humans and nonhumans, and ensuring that actions or interventions are *warranted*. We need to kill to eat, we can do this in the best way possible. We need to end suffering…needless suffering… we can do it in the best way possible. And then accepting and being response-able for all the ways that the 'best' can't always be achieved.

Chapter 6: Thinking Differently, Trusting Wolves – or – Constructing Coexistence

Figure 7: M:W resident, rescued gray wolf Apollo ©PCannon, 2016

Respectful observation and interaction within the system, with the parts and the connections between them, is the only way to see the pattern. You cannot know any part, let alone the whole, without respect.

Tyson Yunkaporta, 2019, Sand Talk, p. 95

6.1 Introduction

I have so far said that this thesis is seeking to construct an idea of coexistence. I have argued that a reflection on our cognitive processes of categorisation and on the stories that we tell stories with are needed to improve our ability to understand ourselves, nonhumans, and the relationships between us. I have also said that appreciating nonhumans have a subjective experience and an interpretive agency is relevant to how we think about communication, participation, and coadaptation. Thinking relationally, questioning our onto-epistemological construction of reality and relationships, and looking more closely at the biopolitical power dynamics at play in human decision-making are all important components of human-nonhuman communication and coexistence. Recognising and growing our mutual abilities to politely greet and respond to other beings, human or nonhuman, can improve our ability to communicate and relate. We can become more skilful, and more available to, the ongoing processes of negotiation that are coexistence in a multispecies, 'full' world.

With this Chapter, I want to elaborate on what I mean by becoming more skilful at thinking relationally and at communication and negotiation with nonhumans, through discussing encounter as touch and regard; response as trust, respect and reciprocity in communication; and the recognition of otherness and agency as core parts of relationality.

Encounter, response, and trust are processes that happen in the in-between – they are processes of relating. Skilfulness in relating affects not just the beings participating in such processes as entities in themselves, it also affects the quality of the relationship too.

These concepts are useful not just in terms of understanding human-human conflict over nonhumans and nature, but also in thinking about what it would mean to understand nonhumans as having interpretive agency and participating actively in processes of negotiation, mediation, and meaning-making with humans. To believe such participation is only available to humans is an unjustifiable reduction (Routley & Routley, 1980).

6.2 Encounter as Touch & Regard

> *My premise is that touch ramifies and shapes accountability. Accountability, caring for, being affected, and entering into responsibility are not ethical abstractions; these mundane, prosaic things are the result of having truck with each other. Touch does not make one small; it peppers its partners with attachment sites for world making. Touch, regard, looking back, becoming with - all these make us responsible in unpredictable ways for which worlds take shape.*
>
> *(Donna Haraway, 2008, When Species Meet, p.35-6)*

Must we touch to encounter each other? Haraway's point in the quote above is that is give form and meaning to accountability, to relationship: it creates experiences and attachment sites through which we co-create our worlds. Haraway's characterisation of touch here is of course very specific, and excludes many forms of physical contact: I don't want to get kicked by a horse, bitten by a dog, or hit by an angry man. Thus, I take Haraway's concept of touch to be about mutually consensual and explorative touch.

The phenomenon of touch in our current interactions with nonhuman life comes now usually in the case of those we care for as pets or in gardens, or the instrumental and disconnected 'touch' involved with those who we choose to eat. Previously, riding or using horses or oxen for transport or labour required touch/encounter/response (or coercion/exploitation) for hours or days at a time. As the steam engine gave way to the combustion engine, and the industrial revolution ploughed onwards, our relationships with nonhuman lives generally became less immediate. Furthermore, in some kind of effort, perhaps, to recognise the autonomy of nonhuman life, where we worked to preserve them, we also made them more and more isolated from us. A typical zoo will now go to great lengths to provide its visitors with viewing opportunities that are as un-invasive as possible for their residents.

This is admirable, theoretically: protecting the resident animals as much as possible from the imposition of human attention is supposed to protect them from the disturbance to their 'natural rhythms' caused by the human touch, presence, gaze, and expectations. The metric for this protection is the reduced agitation of the enclosed animals: they seem more settled, less anxious. Enrichment programs were developed in zoos like this, to allow these captive animals to express, as much as possible, their natural wild tendencies. More recently, however, zoos are also now buying in to the desire for interaction, offering opportunities for (paying) guests to experience a moment of wonder when they feed a lion a snack of some other nonhuman animal through a small window in the glass, or when the cheetah walks over and lays down for a belly rub.

To apply the lens of this thesis to this context… what is the relationship here between human and nonhuman life? Is it still one of commodification and exploitation if the party of lesser power is protected from our most invasive advances - our touch, if not our regard - despite still being locked in an enclosure; with its needs and preferences and desires estimated and addressed?

By removing touch, and making regard one-way, how have we affected response, and by extension, response-ability? To some degree we have elevated the regard with which we consider nonhumans, because we have given some consideration to the experience of these Others. But we have also distanced ourselves from them, reduced that possibility of participatory and active interaction to one of only observation. What significance does that distance have for the ongoingness of our relationships - how can we 'become-with' something that we have drawn a neat box around and abstracted?

For some of the wolves at Mission Wolf, to deny them our touch would have been to deny the constant becoming-with that formed the very basic philosophy of that institution as a locus of learning and responsibility. To return to a quote from M:W Director Kent, presented in the introduction, a key lesson he learnt from taking in the many refugee wolves and wolf-dogs over the years was to respect their unique beings and interactions:

> *The thing I've learned from all the animals here in 32 years is one thing: Everything has a unique interaction. What works for me might not work for you. And what works for you might not work for me. And it doesn't matter as long as you've got something that works.*

But even this issue is not categorical. It was an issue of constant tensions for the volunteers operating the sanctuary: what are people learning when they touch the wolf? Is it just an expression of the visitor's 'entitlement' as consumers of an experience? Or did that interaction bring with it an increased level of understanding and response-ability? Conversely, what entitlement were the volunteers exhibiting in their gatekeeping of the experience? And a perhaps more interesting question: by 'allowing' or even seeking 'touch' by humans, are some wolves buying their care, security, food, shelter?

Several volunteers expressed this as the most challenging part of their role as both educators and guardians of the wolves (remember, don't scare the wolves). Here volunteer Sophie describes her frustrations:

> *especially the people who come here because they want to pet a wolf. That's insane to me. And it's always a very frustrating sort of interaction, especially tour-wise. All they're waiting for is a chance to touch this animal, and not actually respect what it is or what it stands for to most people. Or its, you know, ability to be an individual who deserves respect and space. And so that, sort of, I guess like in a general sense, it's that sort of brash demanding entitlement that is incredibly frustrating to me (SS)*

For some of the volunteers, this was one of the most important distinctions to get across to any visitors:

> *you feel hypocritical saying "you don't want wolves as pets", and you want to fulfil that role of a sanctuary, and yet you are allowing people to meet and touch and pet wolves, as if they were pets - Austin, M:W Volunteer*

> *the most challenging tour is the people that get out of the car saying, "when do I get to pet the wolfies", which then goes back to my… torn-ness on visits and stuff, because they're not here to learn. They don't care about the trophic cascade, they don't care about anything that we have to say, they just want to play with the wolf. You know, you're just not going to reach those people. And it feels like you're just wasting your breath, and trying to set them up properly as the host, to change their mindset on playing with the wolf, and get them to care… I feel like is my big job to set up the tour for the tour guide. Otherwise, the tour guides can be pulling their hair out. [Me: So, you would say that they're more challenging than people who come with really anti-wolf kind of attitudes?] Yes. Because those people have an opinion. They care. They are actually going to listen to what you have to say. Maybe it's only because they want to try to argue against it, but they're going to listen. The people that just want to play with the Wolfies, they're not listening to you. They're waiting until they get to go into the enclosure and that's it - Mike, M:W Volunteer*

However, rather than throwing out the whole concept of touch as attachment site for worldmaking and for accountability, this example highlights the interaction of human and nonhuman relationship and meaning-making inherent to the education program at this sanctuary.

The contradictions between the experience of the Director – who lived through the time when wolves were far more persecuted than they are now; and that of the younger generations of volunteers – who were working off the main priority of keeping these particular wolves 'happy'; are significant to this discussion of touch and regard. Kent saw his purpose as addressing the far greater of two evils: the lack of respect and regard and response-ability to nonhuman Others, as exhibited through killing done for fun. I presented part of this quote in the introduction to describe Kent's moral commitments and motivation for building the sanctuary and educating other; I include the full excerpt here to bring you full circle and connect it to my discussion of the role of touch and regard:

> *… those people are not a threat to me at all. They're obnoxious, and if I can get across to them that this is a mode of communication, and it's not about petting, it's not about kissing, it's "this is how animals work". And that wild is free. Because I've seen many of those people that just love wolves, and want to pet a wolf - they go "oh no I never want to have one". I think that people that want to kill wolves, who have no appreciation, are the biggest threat to the future of humanity. If people have an appreciation for the Wolf, they have an appreciation for nature that supports us all. So that's my… challenge with people that just want to kill for fun. And I think that's where I focus most of my energy. And the… definitely the people that want to buy a wolf can be annoying.*
>
> *But I look at it as the lesser of two evils. If you walk away from here still wanting to own a wolf.*
>
> *There's a lot of wolves that need help. Bottom line. If you walk away from here after meeting a wolf, still think it's OK to kill things for fun. That? I failed.*

Kent's position here is that one form of touch – 'killing for fun' – is not ok. I take him to mean he believes 'fun' is not a warranted reason for killing. Some might argue that such killing is justifiable simply for the human utility created by 'fun'… I am simply arguing that the reasons and justifications for killing need to be made explicit, that we might examine, reflect on, and critique them. Labelling 'killing for fun' as unjustifiable without making explicit the premise of that unjustifiability is no different to labelling killing for science, or for 'management', justifiable with no moral explanation. Agreement on this positions will be difficult between people with different worldviews, affective logics, and values, but it will be impossible if the premises of those worldviews, logics, and values are not examined.

Although I do not believe that touch is necessary for building attachment sites, for learning of and leaning into moral regard, or for making explicit the premises of our moral arguments… I do think that somewhere down the line, for a story of relationship to be spun, it has to be lived. Learning how to greet, and learning how to do so politely, involves learning though experience

what kind of touch is welcome, and what will be rejected. As Lorimer (2015) theorises, the affective logics that are built out of personal engagements become cultural phenomenon emergent from bodily encounters. Harmin, Barrett, and Hoessler (2017) might call such experiential relational learning 'epistemological stretching': a powerful reconceptualising of the relations and relationship.

A key component of this experience, though, is the concept of politeness in greeting. Haraway talks about this in connection with her concept of response-ability. That is, she argues that recognising the subjectivity, the face, of other beings, whether animals or people, does not remove the instrumentality of relations, rather it complements it; and encourages us to take responsibility for that instrumentality:

> *…this is a ramifying tapestry of shared being/becoming among critters (including humans) in which living well, flourishing, and being "polite" (political/ethical/in right relation) mean staying inside shared semiotic materiality, including the suffering inherent in unequal and ontologically multiple instrumental relationships. (Haraway 2008: p.72)*

Haraway's point here is that living well, and being polite, do not take us outside the relationships that we have made meaningful, and do not allow us to avoid the fact that the ongoingness of life inherently involves unequal suffering and death – hence why I include throughout this thesis a consideration of 'dying well' as a requisite to living well.

Furthermore, how beings interpret each other depends on that politeness. Haraway (2008: p. 207) discusses these through developing an idea of 'domestication' as in how we 'nurture better ways to live in multispecies sociality':

> *Refining domestication, the Belgian philosopher and psychologist Vinciane Despret introduces the notion of "anthro-zoo-genetic practice," which construct both animals and humans in historically situated interrelationships. Emphasizing that articulating bodies to each other is always a political question about collective lives, Despret studies those practices in which animals and people become available to each other, become attuned to each other, in such a way that both parties become more interesting to each other, more open to surprises, smarter, more "polite", more inventive. The kind of "domestication" that Despret explores adds new identities; partners learn to be "affected"; they become "available to events"; they engage in a relationship that "discloses perplexity (Haraway 2008 p.207)*

I connect this to the way the Mission: Wolf allows interactions between visitors and the wolves. It is a clearly consensual, unforced interaction, which allows for the kind of open, available, interrelating that Haraway and Despret favour. That is, specific, uncoerced interactions between wolves and humans allows each (?) to recognise their ongoing constructive acts as political and affective experiencers - that is, each being (wolf and human), *participates* in the experience. Humans are not the only beings making meaning about the relationship or interaction, and the interpretive agency of all beings participating in the relationship is an important part of getting along together, of coexisting in a multispecies world.

Response, relationship, and greeting are all processes that require practice, and that have nuance. For example, we would use eye contact to both invite the wolves in, and to ask them to stay away depending on the situation. The nuance here ran deep, was always dependent on context, and intention. It was a form of reciprocal, respectful communication. Sometimes we would want the wolves to turn to us, to come in, to engage. To touch. Other times we wanted them to stay away. To be settled, but not engage. So that we could do what work we needed to: clean their water troughs, collect their droppings, remove the gnawed-out bones.

M:W Director, Tracy, emphasised in my interview for this research, that one of her main desires with the education program at the sanctuary was to inspire. For her, this required learning how to be understood as polite by the wolves (and, by extension, other species). I have illustrated her passion about this in Vignette 7 (on p.90), and the quotes in Box 17 below articulate her position further.

Box 17: Awe and Inspiration

[talking about visiting another wolf sanctuary sometime in the late 1980s] …They wheeled that cage into the centre of the room. And then they took the cover off, whatever. And inside that thing was the scardiest (sic)... I want to say pathetic… Not to be disrespectful to the Wolf, but that's what the human had done to that animal is put it into a pathetic state. And that animal cowered on the bottom of that crate, and it didn't even lift its head up off the ground.... They could barely get the wolf in the door. And then when they did, it just cowered in the corner, right by the door. They couldn't get it beyond.

Showing a scared animal doesn't teach the right thing. You stand there and you feel sad for it. You feel… your heart hurts. You want a person to stand there and look at an animal and feel good, and inspired.

…so, while I was traveling with the wolves, and working really hard to provide them happiness, as well as companionship with each other, and all the care they needed, and the exercise. We would go to places and we would encourage play.

*

I'm thinking of a wolf named Ballazar, that was his real name, his movie star name was Acai, and he was in Jim Dutcher's stuff in the beginning. And he… came here. He had a couple of different… Lessons, so to speak, to tell people. But the main one was that, when you were in his presence, and he was not a social animal, so he was not somebody that you'd take visitors in with, But regardless, you'd be in his presence, you would just be in awe. Because he was magnificent. Not only in the way he looked, but just the way he moved; the way he did his day, the way he walked around his enclosure, the way he processed things. So, he would… immediately make you inspired because he was an inspiring animal.

*

When people got inspired by meeting the wolves. That moment of happiness, that moment of awe. Yes. That energy of, like, "I had no idea, that animal was so amazing". That's the reason why I did it.

…. If you spend time around wolves, you're going to find that the wolves are actually a very joyful, peaceful creature in their… in their inner psyches. They are very, very peaceful, and very joyful.

'Awe' is, according to one usage (Sturm et al., 2022: p. 1) 'a positive emotion elicited when in the presence of vast things not immediately understood'. By asking visitors to first learn how to not scare the wolves, and then throughout the tour and wolf visit, asking them to reflect on themselves, and what they were communicating to the wolves with their bodies and attitudes… These requests encouraged visitors to consider how the wolf was seeing them, and it was, according to Tracy, a powerful educational tool:

> *The bottom line is: people show up to learn. And the more you can help them learn by pointing out what they're doing, the more they're going to learn, and the more they'll take away.*

This educational attitude encouraged visitors into participatory learning, rather than merely a consumption of the experience of meeting the wolves. Prioritising the experience and comfort of the resident wolves over that of the visitors meant that a significant part of the educational program was teaching an appreciation of the wolves' perspective and agency in also participating.

Interestingly, several of my interview participants, both volunteers and visitors expressed a more profound experience from going into the enclosures with some of the less social wolves (see Box 18).

Box 18: Encountering less interested wolves

the behaviours of the actual wolves, really seeing them…. Like Rosie and Tiger. You know, Tiger literally came over and saw us and then he was gone. He was literally gone for that whole time. And it just really was eye opening to see... He investigated and decided that he didn't… He knew what it was and he just didn't care. And Rosie, she kept coming through, but she came down really close the bridge area, and all of us moved to take out our cameras, and she was gone. She was like "mm-mm nope, you moved, I don't like this, I'm out". So, it's kind of kind of cool to see… they really want to come to you on their terms. If they're going to come up to you and accept you. And if you do anything to make them question it, they're like "nup" – M:W Visitor

These guys are definitely… they're not domesticated. So, they… I was interested to see they just come up to you and say, "Ok thanks, Good to know ya", and then they just went and did their thing. So, it was more just that they recognize that you are part of what's going on around them but they really care less. Which is kinda cool. As long as they understood that you weren't a threat to them, they were like 'Great' – M:W Visitor

6.2.1 Resisting Meaning

The nuance and process involved in greeting and relating to others is also reflected in the ways that an other can resist the meaning we are assigning to them. We think we know what the animal wants – based on our own worldviews, values, experiences – and we sometimes seem to think we can impose some control over them. But we can be wrong, are frequently proved wrong: when the magpie swoops us, when the dog runs off chasing after a bicycle, when the horse refuses a jump, when the mob of sheep break out of their enclosure in search of food, or when the wolf

disappears into the forests of Yellowstone rather than standing around to be seen by tourists. These examples show that our idea of control is an illusion, supported by the acquiescence of the other active participants (aka nonhumans). Coexistence in this context is an exercise in adaptation and co-adaptation.

Of all the animals that called Mission: Wolf home, no two were the same. Part of the art of 'keeping the wolves happy' relied on coming to appreciate this uniqueness. That each wolf had different preferences and tolerances. Different thresholds.

Take for example the wolf Apollo. His story was that he'd been listed on Craigslist as a free Husky puppy. A young guy from Boulder, CO, had driven to Spokane, WA, to pick him up, but within a few weeks, realised this was no husky puppy. Apollo came to live at M:W as a relative youngster - 3-5 months old. He slotted into a 'pack' with two other new arrivals, Zeab and Farah. And as he grew, he developed into very much a wolf. Not only did his wariness of humans increase, but some distinctively wolf-like characteristics became plain to see. His giant head and feet. His narrow body.

Within a couple of years, he'd basically decided he didn't want anything to do with people - a common occurrence for wolves brought up in captivity. It is labelled 'independence'. Or 'wildness'. But it could also be dubbed 'behaviour we don't quite understand', or perhaps more accurately, if we're honest, 'reticence to acquiesce to human desires'. Apollo remained relatively unconcerned by the goings on of his human 'housemates' at a distance (the 'quote marks' because one would suppose he did not think of them as such). Step inside his enclosure, and you'd be lucky to get within two meters. If he knew you, he might hang around at that distance. He was curious. But it seemed he just had no interest in any of the other common pleasantries of 'greeting' that humans so often desired – namely, touch. If it was a group of strangers in the enclosure, with no one that he already knew, you'd be lucky to even see him.

If you understand 'greeting' to be the dance of inter-relating, as Haraway (2008) describes, referencing Smuts and Bateson, then an encounter with Apollo takes on a different meaning. Haraway (2008: p. 26) describes this dance as an embodied negotiation, always ongoing:

> *this is what human and nonhuman mammalian non-linguistic communication fundamentally is, that is, communication about relationship and the material semiotic means of relating.*

To think that Apollo's reticence to interact with humans at the distance humans desired meant that he wasn't interacting or communicating with us would be a mistake. Rather, this 'greeting' was his form of negotiation of the contact zone, his move in the dance of inter-relating. Box 19 below illustrates the many aspects of learning this dance, and applying those lessons.

Box 19: Resisting meaning, learning wildness

A total adult, independent. That stark contrast of … how when they're puppies. And it kind of made me think… you know when people adopt wolves or buy wolves or doing anything like that. I could totally see how "yeah I had a wolf for two years, and it went

really well, and they loved me, and they did everything I wanted them to do" and then they turned into their own person – M:W Visitor

we learned also that the more space we gave the animals, that didn't necessarily mean that they would use it! If we would go in with them and wander the space with them, they would be all about it. But when we weren't there, they would either… they would stay down near the corner where they could see the other animals, but you wouldn't see them a lot out exploring. Every now and again you would, but not like you would think, like "oh we've given these animals this huge pen, let them run free". You know "let them go". They are… they're so hooked into each other and the people that, because of that pack nature, that family nature, and they want to see what's going on with everybody, and that's their main priority – Tracy, M:W Director

And so that's what really appealed to me about Mission Wolf is that I could really apply myself in a way that made more sense to me than just studying ecology for example – Sophie, M:W Volunteer

The experience of having a wolf lick my ear. Yeah really. I mean I love wolves. For years and I've seen them in zoos and I don't like watching them in zoos. I hate it. So, seeing them here where they're acting more natural. They'll never be true wild wolves and natural, but this is as close as they come and they have a happier life - MW Visitor

The visitors are definitely into the physical, tangible, meeting a wolf thing… I feel like that's a big way to help people create their own experience… or give them an experience that helps them create a thought around it… and the thought that we are presenting is potentially biased, but here's what's valuable to us, and here's an experience, and you can decide whether or not it's valuable to you. And I think that that is a powerful, a more powerful way versus just talking at people – AJ, MW Volunteer

6.3 Response as Trust and Reciprocal Communication

The focus at M:W on teaching people how to respectfully communicate with, and understand the communication from, the wolves, is an inherently moral and prudential undertaking. Moral because it encourages us to consider the well-being and face of other beings, prudential because it encourages us to consider the benefits and possibilities for getting on together better in specific lifeworlds.

Part of getting along together is trusting each other… so what does it look like to not only not scare a wolf, but also be trusted by one?

6.3.1 Trust

For Kent, the power is in offering trust, instead of insisting it be earned…

And by trusting everybody, it is a unique experience. That's one of the things that I've learned. And I just had a guy that was all excited on Facebook and heard we had solar and I wrote to about him and he's all cool and I went looked at his Facebook page and he's on the edge of, like, make most people raise their eyes, a little rebellious I'll say…. and then I get a message from another local friend going "oh my god. Be careful. Do you know who you commented on??" This and that, and called him a thief and a derelict and blah blah blah. And the thing that I started finding was I some pretty tough

> *gang guys show up. And I just went "hey, how are you guys doing? Come on in, sit down" -- and trusted them, allowed them to have free access to what we needed.*
>
> *And of course, within moments they started protecting what we had. And they started helping take care of things, and they walked away as good friends. And so, I think that's the unique behaviour. Just because you might have had a problem with this person, doesn't mean I do – Kent, M:W Director*

A layer of the way trust worked at Mission: Wolf was that you (as a volunteer or visitor) were offered the trust that you would be responsible for yourself. Trust is built when there is consistency, in both input and outcome. Furthermore, trust is another example of how anthropocentric exceptionalism misses the fact that humans are animals too….Haraway (2008: p. 242) points this out with reference to ethologist Marc Bekoff;

> *Bekoff suggests these animal abilities to initiate, facilitate, and sustain joint "fair" play, where partners can take risks to propose something even more over-the-top and out-of-order than the players have yet ventured together, underlie the evolution of justice, cooperation, forgiveness, and morality. …Bekoff is directing our attention to the astonishing and world-changing naturalcultural evolution of what we call trust.*

Haraway (2008: p. 243) goes on to point out how our expectations of others (perhaps those based on what category we have placed the other being into) affect the capacity for response, and trust:

> *I argued that people must learn to meet dogs as strangers, as significant others, so that both can learn the corporeal semiosis of cross-species trust and enter the open of risking something new.*

I take Haraway to be saying that recognising the other as an independent sovereign being is what allows for trust and co-adaptation.

> *if we appreciate the foolishness of human exceptionalism, then we know that becoming is always becoming with – in a contact zone where the outcome, where who is in the world, is at stake. (Haraway, 2008: p 244)*

Trusting others is part of being response-able, of becoming-with. Trust is never a certainty – it is always difficult, and requires negotiation. We need to *build* relationship though being consistent and reliable, and learning how to be polite.

6.3.2 Reciprocal Communication

Communication inherently implies the transfer of meaning. Communication is not happening when either party is not taking some meaning away from the interaction. Communication can be unintentional, when we overhear a conversation with between other parties; It can be aggressive, when we try to win a debate or force a hand; It can be deceptive, as in when we lie and cheat. It can be direct or indirect. It can be verbal or nonverbal. It can a combination of all of these. The main point here is that all such activities are not restricted to only human beings. Respectful and response-able communication between significant others is where relating happens.

By allowing interactions between visitors and the wolves in the way that M:W does, where it is a clearly consensual, unforced interaction, allows for the kind of open, available, interrelating that Haraway and Despret favour. That is, specific, uncoerced interactions between wolves and humans allows each (?) to recognise their ongoing constructive acts as political and affective experiencers - that is each participant (wolf and human), *participates* in the experience.

*

Kohn's (2013) description of an anthropology beyond the human (introduced in Chapters 3 and 4), articulates an explanation of communication that includes and allows for interspecies meaning transfer. This involves acknowledging, as Barad (2007) does, that anything possessed by humans has emerged from nature, including language. That is, Kohn argues, language is at root a mechanism for communication; but communication does not require language. But Kohn goes further even than this. He argues that language is also not required for the representation that is inherent to communication and meaning making. He argues that meaning is made by anything that is a living self, and that other nonhuman living beings are loci of selfhood. Furthermore, how these other living selves represent us humans is as important, morally, and prudentially, as how we represent them. That nonhuman others can resist the meaning we confer to or on them, is not in itself a demonstration of their agency, because to imply as such would still be reflective of an anthropocentric perspective:

> *Resistance is not agency. Conflating resistance and agency blinds us to the kinds of agency that do in fact exist beyond the human….*
>
> *This approach to nonhuman agency overlooks the fact that some nonhumans, namely, those that are alive, are selves. As selves, they are not just represented, but they also represent. And they can do so without having to "speak"…*
>
> *Although we humans certainly represent nonhuman living beings in a number of culturally, historically, and linguistically distinct ways, and this surely has its effects, both for us and for those beings thus represented, we also live in worlds in which how these selves represent us can come to matter vitally. Accordingly, my concern is with exploring interactions, not with nonhumans generically - that is, treating objects, artifacts, and lives as equivalent entities - but with nonhuman living beings in terms of those distinctive characteristics that make them selves. (Kohn 2013: pp. 91-92)*

This line of logic is significant for any discussion of moral responsibility in human-nonhuman relationships because it brings us to a discussion of agency - which is relevant to my subsequent points here about adaptation/coadaptation. Kohn (2013: p. 92) argues that 'selves, not things, qualify as agents', and furthermore:

> *Resistance is not the same as agency. Nor… does materiality confer vitality. Selves are the product of a specific relational dynamic that involves absence, future, and growth, as well as the ability for confusion. And this emerges with and is unique to living thoughts.*

Kohn's (2013: p. 96) point here is that recognising living beings as loci of self-hood is a crucial component of 'getting by' in the world:

> *Perspectivism is….an ecologically contingent amplificatory effect of the need to understand semiotic selves in a way that simultaneously recognises their continuity with us as well as their differences. It is a response to the other challenges of getting by in an ecology of selves whose relational webs extend well beyond the human, and it emerges from everyday interactions…*

I want to put forward here that awareness of the selfhood and therefore subjective experience of an other (i.e., how are you/they are experiencing me?), in this case, the wolf, is a core part of the educational experience at Mission Wolf. Appreciating how that other perceives us is inherent in the process of growing 'awareness' that the volunteers spoke of. And perhaps this is part of the 'enchantment' of the experiences/the place. See Box 3: Awareness on p. 56 and Box 20 below for illustrations from M:W.

Box 20: Learning how to conduct yourself

The nonverbal communication, is what I learned from the wolves – Shannon, M:W Volunteer

And definitely you learn the subtleties of body language and how to direct your focus and… the things that at least I was… I mean I consider myself to be an animal person, but mostly with domestic animals and pets of course, and a little bit of wildlife, but nothing like this. …it's just taught me to be a calmer person, a more self-aware person. …You can learn about how to conduct yourself from a wolf. How to be more calm, and more aware, more compassionate human being with other human beings… That's why I'm still here is because I believe that the education program here works. Just because we allow people to see these animals, and observe them up close, and come to their own conclusions, and I'm of the mind that the animals speak for themselves. They're the real teachers – Austin, M:W Volunteer

*

As a volunteer at Mission Wolf, I soon realised that my relationships with the wolves required me to learn how to better listen to and observe them: that is, I had to learn how they communicated, and how to best communicate with them. I had to become aware of what they were telling me or demonstrating with their body language. And I had to become aware of what I was telling them, intentionally or unintentionally, with my body and attitude.

For example, a key priority of keeping the wolves happy was making sure they were fed. For some enclosures, this required a delicate dance, every morning, to ensure that both wolves received their breakfast (they mostly lived in pairs). For some of the more skittish and shy animals, this meant learning how to communicate an essential message: I am not here to harm you. It meant working out what distance was ok; what angle of my body and face was acceptable, what extent of eye contact would be received well, and what would result in disappearance or agitation (see Vignette 9). Take for example Farah and Apollo. Farah was very boisterous and friendly. She would be bounding along the fence-line the instant you appeared, salivating heavily and eager to eat. Apollo on the other hand would be reticent. Hiding at the back of the enclosure, pacing restlessly. To coax Apollo down, to make sure he got his breakfast before Farah gulped hers and snuck over to steal his, required a finesse of motion and timing that took practice, luck,

and, most importantly, communication. Communication between the volunteers. And communication with each of the wolves.

Vignette 9: How to feed a wolf

You pace softly closer, a minuscule pause between each footfall.

Wary. Cautious.

Eyes flicker from my face to the sky, to the gate. Your pink tongue delicately licks clean your dark nose, belying your curiosity. You edge nearer.

I kneel down, carefully pick up the pan, turn it over and knock the dust out, right it, and tip the other bowl into it.

Watery red juices ooze out from under the small squares, and the chunks of dark red meat tumble to one side.

Side on, looking intently down the hill to the aspen grove, my presence contained, unthreatening, I quietly slide the pan halfway through the flap and withdraw my arm.

Careful not to shift my weight, I turn my attention from the aspens to the glint of the rooftop down the hill; focus intently on the wisps of smoke curling from the chimney. Try to imagine shapes in those wavering gossamer particles.

Eventually, I turn slowly back to the fence. I pull loose the pan, tip out the one last piece of kibble and the rivulets of juice you neglected, and place the pan back, face down, on the ground. Ready for tomorrow. Finally, I look up, briefly, searchingly, and find you back up in your shadowed nook at the roots of the spruce, your figure masked by the depths of shade, your tongue flashing redly as you remove the last traces from your snout. Your yellow eyes sharp in the morning haze.

And that is enough for today.

What was I communicating here? "I will not harm you"? "I do not want anything from you"? Did that really need to be repeated every morning? Apparently so. "I have to be here (to feed you), and you have to be here (to be fed), we both need to endure/experience/survive this". Learning this level of communication required a stillness and an openness that has permeated out to so many other parts of my life. This is what I understand Haraway to mean when she talks about greeting politely: the nonhuman other is exhibiting interpretive agency in their interaction with me.

Drawing together Haraway's concept of 'encounter value' with his own discussion of morality and meaning making through communication, Kohn (2013: p. 134) describes the 'significant otherness' of nonhuman selves, and, more importantly, the relevance of thinking meaning and morality together:

> *In these encounters we are confronted by an otherness that is radically (significantly) other… But in these encounters, we can nonetheless find ways to enter intimate (significant) relations with these other who are radically not us.*

Kohn (2013: p. 134) is quick to note that ‘many of these selves who are not ourselves are also not humans’, and their otherness does not imply that they are commensurable: ‘they are not symbolic creatures, (which means they are also not loci of moral judgement)’:

> *As such, they force us to find new ways to listen; they force us to think beyond our moral worlds in ways that can help us imagine and realize more just and better worlds.*

Kohn (2013: p. 134) is arguing that improving our ethical practices requires attending to ways of living in a world ‘people by other selves’, and this should ‘come to be a feature’ of the worlds we imagine and desire, that we consider worthwhile. This means considering ‘what kind of flourishing to encourage’, and how we account for the ‘many deaths on which all flourishing depends’ (Kohn, 2013: p. 134):

Of core importance here is recognising the ability to communicate with these nonhuman others. To me, this is not just about moral consideration, but it is about what comes after that - the practical negotiation inherent to enacting the decisions we make about life and the world.

Learning awareness of the ‘significant otherness’ of other (nonhuman) selves forces us to reconsider what 'justice' looks like, and what can be considered 'improvement'. In the case of the wolves at M:W, what would be considered ‘improvement’ for an animal destined to live in a cage for the rest of its life? Why did it matter that the subjective experience of the animal be learnt about? And what could this teach me about all the other ways I related to nonhuman life – consciously or unconsciously.

*

I relate this back to Haraway’s discussion of how we make things ‘killable’ from Chapter 3. There is an ongoing tension between recognizing others as 'selves' in their own right, and as generic beings/food/objects. This is what it means to be alive and live in a world that functions by living beings consuming one another. Negotiating this tension is a constant act, and one that is constitutive of 'being human' (or 'being' anything).

This is why the construction of coexistence I am presenting in this thesis pushes back against the idea that coexistence is thinkable mainly with notions of stewardship or care. Part of becoming more skilful at coexistence is learning to recognise and foster reciprocity, interpretive agency, and politeness.

6.4 Relationality and Coadaptation

> *to be in a relation of use to each other is not the definition of unfreedom and violation. Such relations are almost never symmetrical (“equal” or calculable). Rather, relations of use are exactly what companion species are about: the ecologies of significant others involve mess-mates at table, with indigestion and without the comfort of teleological*

purpose from above, below, in front, or behind. This is not some kind of naturalistic reductionism; this is about living responsively as mortal beings where dying and killing are not optional or able to be laundered like stolen money by creating unbridgeable gaps in the pathways through which the flows of values can be tracked.

Donna Haraway, 2008, When Species Meet, p.74)

In the last iteration of the conceptual framework driving this thesis, I landed on framing my research questions around an idea of coexistence, including asking how we understand ourselves and others, especially through stories of relationship. I was interested all along in what we did with our understanding of ourselves and others: what the material and moral consequences were of those stories, and the stories we told those stories with. Lastly, I was curious as to how we might think differently about human-nonhuman relationships, and what the material and moral consequences might be of thinking differently.

A key point I reached in responding to these questions was an examination of ideas of agency, what ethical theories significant otherness might require of a concept of agency, and vice versa.

I used the concept of wildness to 'think' agency in Chapter 4, and I explore wildness as a basis for relational coexistence in Chapter 5. Here, I want to extend this discussion by connecting this idea of agency to my earlier discussions of moral response-ability, and of significant otherness and coadaptive capacities (also discussed in Chapter 4).

6.4.1 Interpretive agency

I have written throughout this thesis about the idea that it is not only humans that are making meaning about the relationships and interactions between beings. To use Kohn's (2013) phrasing, we live in an ecology of selves, and nonhumans others are active participants in that ecology. We can encounter, touch, regard, and communicate respectfully with other beings, including nonhuman others.

In the Chapter 4 on Beings-in-relationship, I introduced Barad's (2007) definition of agency as a relationship, rather than a property held. Kohn (2013) uses a similar argument to support the re-enchantment of the world, by appreciating other beings as meaning-making, animated, interpretive selves, and Dietz and York (2015) discuss exploitation as the denial of such interpretive agency to nonhuman beings; that is, recognising agency and creativity in nonhuman animals exposes the exploitative stance or relations with which we usually engage with them. Can there be non-exploitative relationships between wolves and humans? Are there non-exploitative relationships between any other animals or between species? Haraway's (2016) theorisation of

sympoeisis is explicitly saying 'yes'; because our very existence is reliant on non-exploitative relationships with other beings – we come into our very being *through* our relationships.

Although we so often place animals in relationships of exploitation and commodification with us, we demand their participation only in ways we find acceptable, when they resist that role, we are surprised. We don't often allow them an opportunity to resist that role, perhaps because we perceive the costs to be too high, because we think we cannot afford to have non-exploitative and open relationships with nonhuman others. Certainly, for some beings like ticks or mosquitoes and their bloodborne diseases I would prefer to have *no* relationship. However, when, where, and how that line is drawn forms part of the categorisation and taken-for-granted boundary infrastructures I have sought to examine with this thesis.

Furthermore, these questions – of what kind of relationship I want to have with nonhuman others – it itself a profound reflection of the fact that nonhuman others are active agential participants in the relationship, and other knowledges and perspectives are present (Barrett, 2011). Recognising that a nonhuman other is experiencing me, interpreting my existence from their own framework, and assessing my potential contribution to their well-being – whether as a source of food, resources, disturbance, or destruction – is a fundamental component of reflecting on what it means to coexist in a multispecies world. Acknowledging that we encounter each other through the contact zone, and respond, allows me to think about how we coadapt.

6.4.2 Agency and Coadaptation

As key premise of this thesis is that although we can never truly know what another is thinking, we can equally still communicate. We can never be sure about what another human is thinking, but we *can* communicate, and we can adapt. The same goes for other nonhuman living selves too.

Allowing for nonhuman creativity and interpretive agency in response to us foreground the possibility of coadaptation. That is, assuming that the nonhuman life that shares this world with us is not constantly adapting to our presence and our actions repeats the dualistic, reductive materialism that rendered animals automata. Examples abound of the ability of 'wild' animals to share our spaces (e.g., coyotes in LA, cougars in Hollywood and Miami, foxes in London, brushtail possums in roof cavities in suburban Australia cities). Nonhuman life is so adept at adapting to us, and for the most part, they do it ways that allow us to pretend they are not.

Humans seem to steadily maintain a cognitive dissonance about the closed or open characteristics of the systems we inhabit. We accept (unthinkingly? unconsciously?) that we coexist with the bacteria in our stomachs, the mitochondria in our cells so well that we think they *are* us. We can ignore the fact there are billions of other organisms in the water we drink or the air we breathe… until they make their presence known in uncomfortable and obvious ways by causing us illness. On the other hand, large mammals like wolves, are almost at the extreme end of the same spectrum: so 'unlike' us as to be impossible to think they are the same as us. When

our ecologies intersect in ways that are not complementary, we notice the clash. Being confronted by a bear in the woods or a snake on the trail is, at least in some ways, the same as being confronted by the giardia or salmonella that makes us unexpectedly sick: we become momentarily fiercely aware of the ongoing transactional nature of our very (co)existence.

Giraud (2019) offers an important distinction with regard to Haraway's typology of response-ability, 'relationality' and 'entanglement' that this thesis in a large part relies upon. That is, Giraud points out that the desire for 'non-relation' is as important for the worlds that are brought into being as is a recognition of relationality and entanglement. Decision-making around the incommensurability of particular forms of relation – that is, the desire for non-relation – inevitably involves exclusions. Giraud's point is that this is an important component of ethical potential.

An ethics of exclusion, as Giraud (2019) articulates, attends to the ways that excluding certain relations can create room for others to emerge. That is, Giraud's work explores 'what comes after entanglement', i.e., how do you operationalise a relational moral concern? How do you 'take responsibility for the exclusions that are fostered by specific entanglements' (Giraud, 2019: p. 172)?

> *"Exclusion can…be a site where accountability is taken not just for who or what is classified as an actor worthy of moral consideration, but – more fundamentally – for which worlds are materialised over others" (Giraud, 2019: p.11).*

Giraud goes on to discuss the 'productive role' of exclusion; where a questioning of the current entanglements and relationships is necessary to create space for alternatives to emerge.

If, in thinking about carnivores, and considering the types of coexistence we wish to exclude (violent, exploitative, 'controlling') we are led to examine alternatives (tolerance, coadaptation), is that the better moral path?

Similarly, to how we must recognise the continuity of human-nonhuman obfuscated by rhetoric of 'disconnection from nature', we must move beyond simply acknowledging the existence of entangled coexistence to question the relationships favoured and materialised by particular stories. This is Boyden's bionarrative at work: stories we tell stories with serve to configure the material world and the biophysical and moral relationships within it, while simultaneously excluding others.

Becoming more skilful at coexistence includes improving our capacity for reflection and response to the always ongoing relationality of our existence, that we are co-created by beings aside from ourselves. Appreciating that coadaptation, trust and communication are already happening opens the possibility for getting better at it.

6.5 Conclusion - Coexistence as transformational coadaptation

> *The condition of being good is that it should always be possible for you to be morally destroyed by something you couldn't prevent. To be a good human being is to have a kind of openness to the world, an ability to trust uncertain things beyond your own control, that can lead you to be shattered in very extreme circumstances for which you were not to blame. That says something very important about the human condition of the ethical life: that it is based on a trust in the uncertain and on a willingness to be exposed; it's based on being more like a plant than like a jewel, something rather fragile, but whose very particular beauty is inseparable from its fragility.*
>
> *(Martha Nussbaum, 1988)*

Where else can the uncertainty, trust, and fragility that Nussbaum argues for here be more exquisitely captured than in the tenuous and fragile links formed and reformed through constant negotiation between significant others, both human and nonhuman. To be 'good' is to be open to, and actively participate in, this ongoing negotiation.

We should by now understand that these enmeshed interactions are a feature of our lives on a multispecies world. We can also recognise that these entanglements are ongoing all over the nonhuman world too. For example, a recent paper in *Nature* demonstrated the significant influence of the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii* on wolf behaviours in Yellowstone National Park. Meyer et al. (2022) explain that wolves become infected with the protozoan parasite through contact with the scat of host cougars, and then these animals, once infected, were more likely to make high-risk decisions like dispersing and creating their own packs. These are two of the most significant behavioural decisions a wolf will make in their lives, and can have effects that extend out through population growth rate, and territorial pack behaviour and culture. Meyer et al. (2022) thus note the potential significance of the influence of parasitic infections on not only individuals and groups, but populations and ecosystem processes.

I include this example to emphasise the point that relationality and coadaptation are powerful factors in the ongoingness of life. With Chapter 4, I sought to demonstrate that coexistence consists of a set of relational properties: it is participatory, reciprocal, negotiated, and responsive. I then sought to demonstrate in Chapter 5 how thinking categorically affects our moral and biopolitical practices and decision-making. Here in Chapter 6, I have elaborated on how incorporating relational thinking and processes into our decision-making and relationships might allow us to become more skilful in the ongoing co-adaptation that is life in a complex multispecies

world. This is my response to Boyden's (2016a) encouragement to reach a new biounderstanding. It matters what *stories we tell stories with*, what ideas we think ideas with.

Coexistence means thinking relationally, acknowledging the constant coadaptation inherent to living on a multispecies world, building trust with nonhuman others through encounter, touch and regard, and becoming more skilful and response-able at participating in the reciprocal communication and negotiation.

We can think of coexistence as transformational co-adaptation. As Yunkaporta (2019: p. 99) states:

> *Adaptation is the most important protocol of an agent in a sustainable system. You must allow yourself to be transformed through your interactions with other agents and the knowledge that passes through you from them.*

This point is reflected in the ways that the volunteers and visitors at Mission: Wolf could talk about the educational experiences provided there. This quote from a volunteer describing the importance of taking visitors inside the enclosure with the wolves articulates this well:

> *I think people definitely love going into the wolf enclosure, and I think it definitely changes people's mindsets about wolves. The tour also does that. But, going in with the wolves secures it more. They're going to remember it for a lot longer than the tour...They're not going to remember all the facts on the tour, but they are going to remember seeing a wolf face-to-face. And how it wasn't super scary and vicious and attacking them or even growling at them. So, I think that's important, to show how sweet these animals really are, and how empathetic they are, and how they are creatures that we should respect, because they respect us – Shannon, M:W Volunteer*

I cannot prove through this thesis or my data that these experiences had by visitors and volunteers at Mission: Wolf have a measurable or lasting effect, beyond my own experiences of their profundity, and the stories told to me by others of their past experiences there. But this is the trouble I want to stay with, to invoke Haraway once more.

What my data can show is that we can and do relate with and communicate comfortably with nonhumans. How we manage those relationship is as fraught and consequential as it is with human others. Human-nonhuman relationships are in need of full epistemic and ontological reconstruction, as they contain as much (if different) moral consideration as those with human others.

So, what is the outcome? It is of course not possible for every single human-nonhuman relationships to be negotiated with utter politeness, just as it is not possible for everyone who wants to meet a wolf to visit Yellowstone and touch one. What is possible is orientating ourselves away from the exploitative, destructive relationships that inhabit our pasts, and actively moving towards a shared biounderstanding. This will include reflecting on the ways our default categorisation become boundary infrastructures, and the consequences for human and nonhumans living and dying well. The biopolitical decisions that are made constantly about which beings should be made to live, and which beings should be made to die, need to make room to account for what it might look like to live and die *well* together.

Chapter 7: Response-able Human-Nonhuman Coexistence – in Conclusion

Figure 8: M:W resident wolfdog, Nashira. ©PCannon, 2018

Calculation also demands another series of questions…. for whom, for what, and by whom should a cost-benefit calculation be made, since more than one always entangled being is at stake and in play in all of these hard cases.

(Haraway 2008: p. 87)

7.1 In Conclusion

Towards the end of my Introduction to this thesis I asked you to consider what it meant to scare a wolf. I said I was interested in examining the cognitive, affective, ontological, epistemological, and ethical perspectives through which we understand human-nonhuman relationships generally, and through which a construction of coexistence might be created. To me, such a construction must include thinking through what it means to live and die well in a finite, complex, multispecies world.

To me, thinking through these questions is crucial to improving our material and moral relationships with other beings and getting along together in the entangled interspecies reality of our existence together. I am arguing that we can become more skilful at communication and coadaptation; recognise the interpretive agency of other beings, and recognise the primacy of thinking relationally, instead of categorically, about ourselves and the nonhumans we share the world with. Boyden (2016b) described concepts of biounderstanding, and biosensitivity and connected those concept to our human physical and psychosocial wellbeing. Through this thesis I have worked towards a construction of coexistence that might enable and represent a more biosensitive relationship between humans and nonhumans. In doing this, I have discussed the relevance of human ideas of nature and nonhumans – including the stories we tell about our relationships, and the stories we tell those stories with – and how the affective logics (Lorimer, 2015) and the cognitive tools of categorisation (Bowker & Star, 1999; Lakoff, 1987) enable but also constrain our relationships with others.

I have questioned the ontologies and epistemologies of human-nonhuman relationship, using the performative new materialism of Barad (2007) and Kirby (1997), and the logical arguments of Routley and Routley (1995), to illustrate that we are all beings-in-relationship first, and that human exceptionalism and properties-based ethical frameworks appear excessively abstract when considered from a relational perspective.

I have questioned what role ethics has had in this space in the past – specifically the anthropocentrism and human chauvinism inherent to most ethical frameworks (Routley & Routley, 1995) and connected that discussion to Haraway's (2008) presentation of responsibility as responsiveness, Kohn's (2013) articulation of the relationships between all beings in an 'ecology of selves', and the possibilities for communication and coadaptation between humans and nonhumans that exist when the abilities of either/both/each as interpretive and participating agents is accepted.

I have questioned the meaning that we make about nonhumans, and the biopolitical processes through which the stories of our relationship to nonhumans have material and moral consequences on our and other lives. I have done this using the case of conservation, specifically carnivore conservation.

Lastly, I have detailed ideas and examples of trust, reciprocal communication, agency, coadaptation, and relationality that might help us to reframe (and redo) our relationships with nonhuman life (/nonhuman selves).

Throughout, I have 'peppered my story with attachment sites for meaning making' (Haraway, 2008) by offering excerpts from my interviews with visitors and volunteers to the Mission: Wolf refuge, as well as vignettes of my own stories about my experiences and learnings there. The wolf sanctuary, and the beings there, prompted this research project and spurred me to contemplate things I had taken for granted about how I wanted to be in the world. Of whom I wanted to be by the end of my life.

Throughout my time living at the refuge, I wondered whether it mattered that I withdraw my expectations of the wolves and recognised their ability to resist the meaning I might make about them. I contemplated, at length, what was going on in the encounters I had with, and witnessed between, the many selves living in that mountain sanctuary. I learnt how not to scare the wolves, how I was being seen by them, and what this meant for how I related to them and to other beings. I contemplated how these learnings might transfer to my other relationships and communication with other human and nonhuman beings, whether that be wolves in the wild, birds in my backyard, or pets or animals under my care or 'control', or the friends I travelled through life with. I wondered at the logic (and the entrenched systems reinforcing it) of confronting fear with violence. I was interested in understanding how to coexist, and why it was worth trying to coexist, with the wildness in the animals at Mission: Wolf, and with wildness in the world in general. I wanted to know that it mattered, and that it was worthwhile, that there be wildness it the world.

To me, all this learning and thinking and wondering amounted to a fundamental reframing of relationships between myself and nonhuman life. Through this thesis I have sought to develop and share from that personal reframing, through examining this sanctuary and the experiences of others there, and linking to ideas in the literature from an analytic lens of biosensitivity, relationality, and phronesis.

*

This extrapolation led me to reflect on the consequence of a framing of morality around 'boundaries of moral concern', to recognise the always ongoing negotiation inherent to living in a multispecies world, and to examine the power imbalances and biopolitics of those negotiations on a broader scale. As noted from the start, finding the 'right' answers was not my goal here. I am arguing that by acknowledging the priority of a biosensitive and response-able human-nonhuman relationship, by recognising the unavoidability of always ongoing interspecies interaction and co-adaptation (especially in the world we have now filled), and by appreciating the inevitability of life coming to an end: we can reimagine the story of relationship between human and nonhuman life, and construct an idea of coexistence that is fluid, responsive, and robust.

Through my analysis of the data I collected at Mission: Wolf, I have offered a description of a one case-study. Through discussion, negotiation, and contextualisation of this description in relation to broader concepts and themes in literature and society, I have asked my reader to reflect on the broader theoretical and practical implications and consequences of ideas of human-nonhuman relationships, coexistence, and moral response-ability. I have asked my reader to consider these questions from the lens of practical wisdom and phronetic skill. Where are we headed with the current framings of the human-nonhuman relationships in the Anthropocene? Why? Is it desirable? And for whom does that future work: who gains and who loses? And who do we consider to be a relevant 'who'?

7.1 Why consider human-nonhuman relationships?

People with different worldviews, life experiences, values, and affective logics will have varying assumptions regarding the worthwhileness of any material/biophysical context or arrangement (including human/nonhuman life arrangements).

Seeking to achieve alignment or consensus on this sense of worthwhileness can be challenging within groups of humans, because of differing ontological and epistemological perspectives on things and relationships. If we then attempt to include the question of what a wolf might think is worthwhile, consensus becomes nigh impossible. What humans think nonhuman life is or has (e.g., sentience/intelligence/the ability to suffer/agency/the ability to participate and respond); and what counts as relevant to decision-making, ethics, and sustainability in the Anthropocene all have consequences for how well we all live and die.

There also needs to be an element of time and context in any discussion of worthwhileness. For example, I believe it is worth my while to be a kind, generous, and thoughtful person. This is a fundamental moral commitment I hold, but it is also a moral practice, and it is fallible. The point is not that I am always kind, generous and thoughtful; the point is that that is my orientation and default setting. When we navigate through geographic space, we are constantly required to calibrate our heading against the environment. Are we still going in the direction intended? Should we navigate around the river, or do we have to cross it?

This is not to reduce morality to relativistic and changeable notions. It is to acknowledge that a moral direction requires constant negotiation with reality in its pursuit. Midgley and Pinzon (2013) write about our ability to reflect on our moral reasoning and the importance of recognising others' moral reasoning in any context of conflict or mediation. They argue that this negotiation is crucial to resolving human-to-human conflict. In this sense, conflict, or even war, can be understood both as 'what happens when our ability to negotiate has broken down', or as what happens when we do not want to, or think we cannot, negotiate. Conversely, various forms of violence are often the forms of communication we use when we think other forms will not be understood/will not achieve the outcome we desire. Humanism is generally committed to the idea

that we should avoid doing harm to each other (i.e., other humans), and this moral reasoning is commonly accepted as sound in modern democratic societies. But this reasoning, as a general commitment, is a constant practice: conceptions of 'harm' are context dependent, reflection is needed on the arbitrary boundaries drawn around who should be considered as recipients/experiencers of harm, and balances in trade-offs are not static.

This means moral responsibility requires ongoing engagement and negotiation - hence Haraway's reframing of moral relationships around responsiveness, that is, as 'response-ability' (literally, the ability to respond). Our ability to respond to each other is precisely where the possibility for engagement, negotiation, and improvement in our moral and material relationships lies.

All of this, however, relies on a degree of *trust* between beings. Mission: Wolf was able to present their education program the way they did, including taking large groups of people into enclosures with the wolves, because they had dedicated time, energy, and attention to building trusting relationships with all the humans and nonhumans involved. Trust is built through being open, responsive, and in communication with the other being, and can always be rejected or withdrawn. It won't always work…. But does that make its pursuit not worthwhile? Part of building trust is knowing when it is not present…when one side is too hungry or hurt to be trusting or trusted.

In thinking about human/non-human relations, recognising the responsiveness, engagement, participation, and coadaptation that is happening between us is crucial to reassessing the moral responsibilities inherent in the biopolitical decisions we make about nonhuman lives, about which nonhuman lives we choose to let/make live or let/make die, and who gets to live and die *well*.

7.2 Coexistence as Living and Dying Well Together

With this thesis, I have sought to understand how we experience and appreciate nature and nonhuman lives. I have used my data from my research at the Mission: Wolf sanctuary as illustrations, and as prompts in my search for a construction of coexistence that has depth and philosophical gravity.

By meeting the wolves where, when and how that I did, I was led to question some fundamental premises of our social arrangements, goals/purposes, and means of getting there. This thesis is not a linear search for new knowledge. The stories that emerge from the data gathered circle around and re-energise the inquiry itself, point it in new directions and reveal new layers previously unexamined. They ask us what it would mean to be wise and good, and to live and die well in a properly recognised interspecies world.

Where I have landed, is an understanding of coexistence as so much more than notions of stewardship or care which can be mistaken as unidirectional and objectifying. I seek to

characterise coexistence by three fundamental tenets: first, nonhuman beings are selves, with a subjective perspective and experience, and a significant otherness than obliges me to respond. Second, getting along together involves a participatory and reciprocal, though not necessarily equal dance of relating, where we all have interpretive agency. Third, coexistence is a process of constantly reflecting, negotiating, responding, coadapting, and relating to and with other beings, though offering and learning how to trust each other.

The moral argument of this expanded construction of coexistence rests on the premise that when thinking about the moral status of non-human entities we should focus less on their intrinsic metaphysical properties and more on the relationships between beings. This addresses Routley & Routley's (1995) point that moral obligation need not rest on an equal or entirely reciprocal relationship, nor that a human value need necessarily be imposed. Decision points happen downstream of the categories, beliefs, and perspectives we already hold: choice is what happens by virtue of the impressions, memories, desires, and categories we have for thinking. To improve morally, to better recognise our response-ability, we need to reflect on our metaphysics and cosmology, examine our ontology and epistemology, and improve our capacity to think relationally.

Thinking relationally towards coexistence can be the counterweight to thinking reductively. How we relate to wildlife is comparable to how we relate to each other. Improving our ability to engage actively with new knowledge and allow ourselves to be inspired in perhaps heretofore unimagined ways is an important component of imagining and creating a worthwhile future socio-ecological system. I believe that human-nonhuman communication and coadaptation are always already happening, and it is always worthwhile to open ourselves to the possibility of different ways of relating to and coexisting with nonhuman nature. I see the Mission: Wolf sanctuary as offering a practical example of that philosophy in action, and of the possibilities of learning reciprocal, trusting ways to communicate, co-adapt, and coexist with nonhumans. Framing this as an extension of the spheres of moral concern still centres the Anthropos as the relationally significant being – i.e., we should treat 'animals' as we treat fellow humans. I am arguing that if we consider nonhumans as little different from us, and the 'boundaries of our moral concern' as arbitrary, then we are called to appreciate the nuanced judgement involved in each encounter.

The stories we tell, and the *stories we tell stories with*, construct us, and other humans and nonhumans. These stories can and do change: they are changeable. Mission: Wolf shows this, and demonstrates the clear capacity for respectful and reciprocal communication, and the capacity to build trusting relationships with nonhumans. The only barriers to such communication are human constructions – and thus can be broken down.

Establishing such a concept of coexistence in conservation science and practice will be slow. Establishing human-nonhuman trust across fraught spaces will be challenging. Part of this will involve recognising and celebrating when coexistence and coadaptation happens well.

If I must live and die in a full earth, I want to live and die well, and in a wild one.

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Appendix 1: Interview Protocols

1. Volunteer Staff Interviews:

Familiarity with the volunteer context at Mission: Wolf will allow for these interviews to be conducted with sensitivity. Participants will be made aware that, given the small sample size, their responses may be identifiable, especially by other members of the staff. As such, participants will be encouraged to refrain from saying anything that may jeopardise their relationships with other staff, or their position as a staff member at the sanctuary.

Personal history/context:

- Why did you come here?
- How long have you been here for?
- Did you have any previous experience with wolves/wolf conservation/wolf rescue?
- Did you have any previous experience with education?

Experience at the sanctuary:

- What have you learnt in your time here
  - About wolves?
  - About people?
- What has been the most powerful thing for you about being here?
- What do you think is the most important part of this educational program here?
  - Why?
  - What are the strengths?
  - What are the weaknesses?
- Do you remember any difficult/challenging tours/visitors? (What are the worst tours?)
  - How would you define 'difficult'/'challenging'?
  - How do you deal with this?
- Do you remember any particularly rewarding or satisfying tours/visitors? (What are the best tours?)
- When do you feel most effective as a tour guide?
  - Why?
- Have you learnt anything directly from the animals here?
  - How/Why?
- What did you know about wolves before you came here?
  - What do you think about them now?

2. Follow-up Volunteer Staff Interviews:

It will be useful to gather further information from Volunteer staff via some kind of 'exit interview'. That is, I will endeavour to interview the same staff members again at the conclusion of the fieldwork, to gather their views on, for example:

- Their reflections on participating in the research project
- Their observations of others participating in the research

3. Visitor Questionnaires:

This questionnaire will be constructed adaptively, incorporating feedback from the volunteer interviews, and responding to logistical constraints. However, the following should indicate all areas that may be covered:

Attributes:

- Age:
- Gender: (M/F/Other/prefer not to identify)
- Profession:

- Place of residence (/+ upbringing):
- Do you identify with any of these groups?
  e.g.
  - Hunter
  - Ranchers
  - Conservationist
  - Wilderness recreational user (hiker/Snowsports/horseriding/motorbikes)
  - Other _____
- Which one would you say you identify with the most?

Experience:

- Why did you come here?
- Have you been here before? (Why did you return?)
- Had you ever seen a wolf before?
- What is a wolf? (interesting to see what attributes or feature people use to describe wolves)
- Have you ever been involved in any activities related to wolf conservation? (pro or against)
- Have you ever owned a wolf or part-wolf, or thought about owning a wolf as a pet?
- What are three things you know about wolves? (/3 most dominant thoughts about wolves?)
- what do you like/dislike about wolves? (Interesting to access what people see, like/dislike or attribute to/project onto the wolf)

Context/Perspective:

- Which statement best represents your view?
  - (NB: this section of the questionnaire will be used to capture a profile of the participants values and decision-making methods around e.g. nature, animals, wildlife, and wolves).
- What do you think your community thinks about wolves? / What do you think most other people think about wolves?
- Have you ever been involved in or witnessed any disagreement or conflict between people in your community about wildlife/wolves or about wildlife/wolf conservation activities?
- Do you think it is likely that wolves could live in your area? Why/why not?
- What would you think if you learnt there were wolves in your area?

4. Visitor Interviews:

Does learning about the role of wolves in ecosystem influence your opinion on if/how we should do conservation for wolves?

Does your interaction with the animals influence your opinions on if/how we should do conservation for wolves..?

- What was the most striking thing about your experience today?
- What things did you learn today that stick in your mind the most?
- Did you learn anything from the animals today that was different to or in addition to what you learnt from the people here?
- Did you learn anything about communication today?
- Do you think differently now about communicating with non-human animals?

5. Follow-up Questionnaires (+3 months, via email):

- What are the key messages you remember from your MW experience?
- What is a wolf? (interesting to recap this question and see if anything has changed)
- Has the experience you had at MW affected:

    - The way you think about nature broadly?
    - The way you think about animals?
    - The way you think about wolves?
    - How you talk about nature/animals/wolves with others?
- Do you think your experience at M:W has changed anything about how you interact with animals now?
    - Domestic animals?
    - Wildlife?
- Do you have any reflections on being involved in this research project as part of your MW experience?

Appendix 2: Participant Consent Forms

WRITTEN CONSENT for Participants - Visitors

Carnivores, 'Conservation', and Coexistence

I have read and understood the Information Sheet you have given me about the research project, and I have had any questions and concerns about the project (listed here

_____

_____

)
addressed to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in the project. YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree to the interview being audio-recorded YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree to be identified in the following way within research outputs:

Full name YES ☐ NO ☐

Pseudonym YES ☐ NO ☐

No attribution YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree to being contacted at two points in the future (3-months and 6-months) to be invited to participate in a follow-up online questionnaire:

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you agree, please supply an email address: ……..

Signature:…….

Date:…….

WRITTEN CONSENT for Participants – Volunteers

Carnivores, 'Conservation', and Coexistence

I have read and understood the Information Sheet you have given me about the research project, and I have had any questions and concerns about the project (listed here

_____

_____

)

addressed to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in the project. YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree to the interview being audio-recorded YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree to be identified in the following way within research outputs:

Full name YES ☐ NO ☐

Pseudonym YES ☐ NO ☐

No attribution YES ☐ NO ☐

I understand that the research will also draw on the field notes and journal reflections of the researcher via the process known as 'participant observation': YES ☐ NO ☐

Signature:…….

Date:…….

Appendix 3: Information Sheets

Participant Information Sheet - Visitors

Researcher:

My name is Pele Cannon. I am a PhD Candidate at the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the Australian National University in Canberra, Australia.

Project Title: Carnivores, Conflict, and Coexistence: A human-ecological perspective

General Outline of the Project:

- I am conducting research about understanding the different knowledge, values and perceptions that people hold about canine predators like wolves, and the effects of an educational intervention that seeks to alter these perceptions.
- I am seeking to interview a variety of visitors to Mission: Wolf, as well as long and short-term volunteers at the sanctuary. I intend to collect approximately 30 interviews.
- The information you share will be analysed in the context of a wider research project about human-nature relationships. This data will potentially be used in peer-reviewed publications, and will contribute to my doctoral thesis. Any participants in the research will be notified of any publications, and offered a summary or a copy of the full publication.
- This project is funded through a PhD scholarship (the Australian Post-Graduate Research Training Program Scholarship) provided by the Government of Australia. There are no other sources of funding. This research has in no way been commissioned by Mission: Wolf.
- This research is seeking and encouraging the expression of all views and experiences. I, as the researcher, do not endorse any particular view, and am eager to hear what you have to say.

Participant Involvement:

- *Voluntary Participation & Withdrawal:* Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. At any time during the research, you may refuse to answer a particular question, or choose to withdraw completely from the interview. You do not need to provide any explanation for this, and any contribution you have made can be withdrawn, at which time your contributions will be removed from the record. After the interview and up until the time of publication, you may request that your contribution be withdrawn, at which time your particular contribution will be removed from the record. Once the findings of this research project have been published, your contributions will not be able to be withdrawn.
- *What does participation in the research entail?* Your participation in this research will involve answering some questions on a questionnaire, and potentially in an interview. The questions will be about your ideas, perceptions, knowledge and values around several topics, including 'nature', wolves, your identity, and your social networks. They will be relatively short, open-ended questions. If at any time you feel uncomfortable answering a specific question, you are welcome to refuse to answer that question and continue with another, or withdraw from the research altogether. The interview will be

recorded, with your consent. The only people that will have access to these data will be me, my supervisors and any research assistants I may employ to complete my transcriptions and analysis.

- *Location and Duration:* The research will be conducted at Mission: Wolf sanctuary. You will first be asked to complete a short questionnaire. This should take about 5 minutes. Following your participation in the Mission: Wolf education program, you will participate in an interview. This interview should last approximately 30 minutes. On the questionnaire you will asked to indicate your interest in participating in a follow-up questionnaire, online, in 3 months and again in 6 months. This activity should only require another 15 minutes of your time on each date. This component is also entirely optional.
- *Risks:* The questions asked as part of this research project have a small potential to make you feel uncomfortable, as I will ask you about sensitive things such as how you identify yourself, and what you think about issues of community conflict or disagreement. Your contributions to this research project will be kept securely, and any data used in the final publication(s) will be identified using a coding system. See the Confidentiality section below for details on this. There is a small risk that your opinions may be identifiable by a third-party, given the small number of participants in this research. There is a small chance your responses could be linked back to you by someone familiar to the situation. With this in mind, please remember that you do not have to answer any question you do not want to, and you are welcome to cease participating at any time.
- *Benefits:* The component of this research project that you are participating in today is focused on understanding the diverse ways people think about 'nature' and about predators like wolves.
- It is unlikely that there will be any direct benefit to you from participating, but there will potentially be indirect benefits to you from being involved in the interview process as it may prompt you to reflect on your own circumstances in a positive way. This research will be of broad benefit to the community as it is seeking to find more peaceful and constructive ways to resolve conflict over carnivore conservation.
- Your decision to participate or not participate in this research project in no way affects your experience at Mission: Wolf. If you choose not to participate, you will still be able to access the full educational experience offered at the sanctuary.
- This research project is limited to participation by adults. Anyone under the age of 18 will not be able to participate in the research directly.

Confidentiality:

- Your details and any information you provide will be kept confidential as far as the law allows. Any quotes that are to be used in publications will be labelled via a coded system, and should not be identifiable.

Privacy Notice:

- In collecting your personal information within this research, the ANU must comply with the Privacy Act 1988. The ANU Privacy Policy is available at https://policies.anu.edu.au/ppl/document/ANUP_010007 and it contains information about how a person can:
    - Access or seek correction to their personal information;

- Complain about a breach of an Australian Privacy Principle by ANU, and how ANU will handle the complaint.

Data Storage:

- All data from this project will be stored for the duration of the fieldwork on a password-protected laptop computer, and on a password-protected portable hard-drive. As per the Ethics Approval requirements, all the data will be securely archived on a ANU database for 5 years following publication of the results. Following the required data storage period, the data will be continue to be archived in a de-identified format, as it may be of use for future research, though this is unlikely.

Queries and Concerns:

- If at any time you have queries about the research project, you can contact me on pele.cannon@anu.edu.au, or +61474745477, or my primary supervisor Lorrae van Kerkhoff on lorrae.vankerkhoff@anu.edu.au
- Local Contact: As the researcher is located overseas, your Local Contact person will be Kent Weber (M:W Director – info@missionwolf.org).

Ethics Committee Clearance:

The ethical aspects of this research have been approved by the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol 2017/936) If you have any concerns or complaints about how this research has been conducted, please contact:

Ethics Manager
The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee
The Australian National University
Telephone: +61 2 6125 3427
Email: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au

Participant Information Sheet - Volunteers

Researcher:

My name is Pele Cannon. I am a PhD Candidate at the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the Australian National University in Canberra, Australia.

Project Title: Carnivores, Conflict, and Coexistence: A human-ecological perspective

General Outline of the Project:

- I am conducting research about understanding the different knowledge, values and perceptions that people hold about canine predators like wolves, and the effects of an educational intervention that seeks to alter these perceptions.

- I am seeking to interview a variety of visitors to Mission: Wolf, as well as long and short-term volunteers at the sanctuary. I intend to collect approximately 30 interviews and questionnaires.
- The information you share will be analysed in the context of a wider research project about human-nature relationships. This data will potentially be used in peer-reviewed publications, and will contribute to my doctoral thesis. Any participants in the research will be notified of any publications, and offered a summary or a copy of the full publication.
- This project is funded through a PhD scholarship (the Australian Post-Graduate Research Training Program Scholarship) provided by the Government of Australia. There are no other sources of funding. This research has in no way been commissioned by Mission: Wolf.
- This research is seeking and encouraging the expression of all views and experiences. I, as the researcher, do not endorse any particular view, and am eager to hear what you have to say.

Participant Involvement:

- Voluntary Participation & Withdrawal: Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. At any time during the research, you may refuse to answer a particular question, or choose to withdraw completely from the interview. You do not need to provide any explanation for this, and any contribution you have made can be withdrawn, at which time your contributions will be removed from the record. After the interview and up until the time of publication, you may request that your contribution be withdrawn, at which time your particular contribution will be removed from the record. Once the findings of this research project have been published, your contributions will not be able to be withdrawn.
- What does participation in the research entail? Your participation in this research will involve answering some questions in an initial interview, and potentially a follow-up interview at a later stage. The interview will involve questions about your ideas, perceptions, knowledge and values around several topics, including 'nature', wolves, education, sustainability, ethics, and conservation. The questions will also ask you to reflect on your experiences as an educator at Mission: Wolf. They will be relatively short, open-ended questions. If at any time you feel uncomfortable answering a specific question, you are welcome to refuse to answer that question and continue with another, or withdraw from the research altogether. The interview will be recorded, with your consent. The only people that will have access to these data will be me, my supervisors and any research assistants I may employ to complete my transcriptions and analysis. The researcher will be conducting a process called 'participant observation' throughout her time at the sanctuary. This will involve a reflective journaling process where she will collect observations about the research ideas, findings and insights, and the progress of the M:W educational program. This may include reflections on conversations with Staff, and observations about conversations between Staff, and between Staff and Visitors.
- Location and Duration: The research will be conducted at Mission: Wolf sanctuary, at a time convenient to the other operations of the sanctuary. The initial interview should take between 30-90 minutes. A follow-up interview, if possible, convenient, and appropriate, will be conducted at a later stage (ideally 3 months from the initial interview), and should take between 30-60 minutes.

- Risks: The questions asked as part of this research project have a small potential to make you feel uncomfortable, as I will ask you about sensitive things such as how you identify yourself, and what you think about issues of community conflict or disagreement. Your contributions to this research project will be kept securely, and any data used in the final publication(s) will be identified using a coding system. See the Confidentiality section below for details on this. There is a risk that your opinions may be identifiable by a third-party, given the small number of participants in this research. There is a small chance your responses could be linked back to you by someone familiar to the situation, including other members of the volunteer staff. With this in mind, please remember that you do not have to answer any question you do not want to, and you are welcome to cease participating at any time.
- Benefits: The component of this research project that you are participating in today is focused on understanding the diverse ways people think about 'nature' and about predators like wolves.
- It is unlikely that there will be any direct benefit to you from participating, but there will potentially be indirect benefits to you from being involved in the interview process as it may prompt you to reflect on your own circumstances in a positive way. This research will be of broad benefit to the community as it is seeking to find more peaceful and constructive ways to resolve conflict over carnivore conservation.
- Your decision to participate or not participate in this research project in no way affects your experience at Mission: Wolf. If you choose not to participate, you will still be able to access the full educational experience offered at the sanctuary.
- This research project is limited to participation by adults. Anyone under the age of 18 will not be able to participate in the research directly.

Confidentiality:

- Your details and any information you provide will be kept confidential as far as the law allows. Any quotes that are to be used in publications will be labelled via a coded system, and should not be identifiable.

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Following the required data storage period, the data will be continue to be archived in a de-identified format, as it may be of use for future research, though this is unlikely.

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Ethics Manager
The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee
The Australian National University
Telephone: +61 2 6125 3427
Email: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au

Appendix 4: Preliminary Questionnaire

Australian National University

"Carnivores, 'Conservation', and Coexistence"

Pele Cannon

PhD Scholar, Australian National University

Preliminary Questionnaire

Why are you here? (pick one)

☐ To learn about wolves/wolfdogs ☐ To pet a wolf

☐ To learn about wolf ecology ☐ To contribute to wolf conservation

☐ To see/learn about sustainability

How old are you? (Circle one) 18 – 24 25 – 34 35 – 44 45 – 54 55 – 64 65+

What gender do you identify with: ☐ M ☐ F ☐ Other ☐ prefer not to identify

Where do you live? _____

Where did you grow up? _____

What is your profession? _____

Do you identify with any of the following? ☐ Hunter ☐ Rancher

☐ Conservationist ☐ Outdoor Recreational User ☐ Other

Have you been here before? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Why did you return? _____

If 'no', have you ever seen a wolf before? ☐ Yes ☐ No

In captivity? In the wild?

Have you ever owned a wolf or part-wolf, or thought about owning a wolf as a pet?

☐ Yes

☐ No

What are three things you know about wolves?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Would you say you know …… about wolves?

☐ A lot ☐ A little ☐ Not Much

How would you describe a wolf/wolves? _____

_____

_____

What do you like/dislike about wolves? _____

_____

_____

What do you think your community thinks about wolves? _____

_____

_____

Have you ever been involved in or witnessed conflict/disagreement about wolves?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do wolves live near you? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know

Do you think it is likely wolves could return to your area?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know

Why/Why not? _____

_____

_____

What would you think if you learnt there were wolves in your area? _____

_____

_____

Which of these statements would you say you agree with the most?

☐ Wolves are a natural part of the environment, they belong in all places where they naturally occurred, and we should help them return to those areas

☐ There are too many people in most places for wolves to live, we shouldn't help them return to areas they aren't currently in, but they should be protected where they do live or return to on their own

☐ Wolves don't need help from people in any way, they are wild animals

☐ Wolves should not be allowed to live anywhere near humans, and we should remove them from place where they come into contact with humans

Appendix 5: Codes

Code Name	Files	References
Agency	15	55
Anthropomorphism	5	18
MW allows for animals' agency	12	32
Biopolitics	7	8
Categorization	16	64
Boundary Infrastructure	2	2
Dangerous-Safe	6	10
Individual-Ecosystem	3	3
Wild-Domestic	10	27
Wolf-Dog	11	16
Co-Adaptation	11	45
Semiosis	7	29
The 'other' is experience me	7	28
Unique individuals	2	10
Coexistence	16	83
Carnivore coexistence	10	14
human-human coexistence	5	14
human-wolf relationships	11	38
Live and let live	6	10
Consequences	5	10
Education	15	51
Access	1	1
Most important part of Program	15	31
Origin of MW Ed Prog	1	6
Experience-Experiential	19	142
Applied learning	11	16
Participation	1	1
Awareness	7	23
Learnt from animals	16	47

Wolf Interactions	15	41
Reality	8	20
Expectations of wolves	3	8
Reconnect People and Nature	8	28
Inspiration	3	16
Reframing approaches to Governance and Conservation	8	19
Anthropocentrism	2	2
Connection Agric + Conserv.	3	5
Connection Hunting + Conserv.	3	3
Wilderness	2	3
'Story'	18	292
Communication	6	20
Entitlement	6	18
Framing	13	45
Romanticised	4	4
Rules - modify behaviour	5	8
Negotiating knowledge	15	133
Conflict	7	27
Disinterest	5	5
MW's position in community	2	2
Open-mindedness	6	14
Pushing boundaries	1	2
Scientific knowledge	8	14
Ecological processes-balance	3	4
Two-way engagement	6	12
Origin of MW	1	7
Perceptions of Nature	11	37
Projections	3	9
Why they like wolves	8	17
Values	5	20