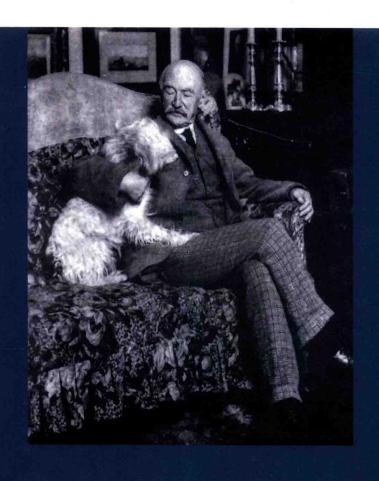
THOMAS HARDY AND ANIMALS

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University of St Andrews



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
4843/24, 2nd Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, Delhi – 110002, India
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

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www.cambridge.org Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107179172 DOI: 10.1017/9781316831861

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First published 2017

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-107-17917-2 Hardback

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THOMAS HARDY AND ANIMALS

Thomas Hardy and Animals examines the human and nonhuman animals who walk and crawl and fly across and around the pages of Hardy's novels. Animals abound in his writings, yet little scholarly attention has been paid to them so far. This book fills this gap in Hardy studies, bringing an important author within range of a new and developing area of critical inquiry. It considers the way Hardy's representations of animals challenged ideas of human—animal boundaries debated by the Victorian scientific and philosophical communities. In moments of encounter between humans and animals, Hardy questions boundaries based on ideas of moral sense or moral agency, language and reason, the possession of a face, and the capacity to suffer and perceive pain. Through an emphasis on embodied encounters, his writings call for an extension of empathy to others, human or nonhuman. In this accessible book, Anna West offers a new approach to Hardy criticism.

ANNA WEST is an early career researcher specializing in Victorian literature and animal studies. Since receiving her PhD from the University of St Andrews, where her research was funded by a Macpherson scholarship, she has published articles on Thomas Hardy, Victorian science and literature, and ecocriticism. She currently lives and teaches in Detroit, Michigan.

Acknowledgments

Material from the second chapter of this book first appeared in article form: the first section was published as "The Woman and the Dog: Moral Sense and Moral Agency in Far from the Madding Crowd" in the Thomas Hardy Journal, and part of the second section originally appeared as "'Rot the Genuine': Moral Responsibility and Far from the Madding Crowd's Cancelled Fragment" in the Journal of Victorian Culture. I am grateful to both journals for permission to include this work here (and to Phillip Mallett and Trev Broughton, respectively, for their attentive editorial guidance). Other ideas included in this book received first airing at a range of academic conferences; I am grateful to the Thomas Hardy Society, the French Association of Thomas Hardy Studies, the British Association of Victorian Studies, and the North American Victorian Studies Association for support to present at their respective conferences in the past few years, and to the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment for their sponsorship to present at the Reading Animals conference held at Sheffield University in 2014. For his generous support of the research that forms the backbone of this book, I thank James Macpherson.

There are perhaps few academic communities as welcoming and congenial as the group of Hardy scholars, who welcomed me from my first attendance at the Hardy at Yale conference in 2011. I am grateful to this community and to the community at St Andrews for the lively conversations and thoughtful debates on Hardy's work and for the support and encouragement provided by mentors, colleagues, and friends (especially Jane Thomas, Mary Rimmer, Jacqueline Dillion, Karin Koehler, Tsung-Han Tsai, and Lisa Griffin). Thank you, too, to Helen Gibson, the curator of the Hardy Collection at the Dorset County Museum, for allowing me to examine archival material (and for even dismantling a display case to let me look at the cancelled sheep-rot chapter!). I am grateful to Ray Ryan for taking on this project, and to the team at Cambridge University Press for their work in seeing it through production. Thanks especially to Roger

Ebbatson and Keith Wilson for their careful attention to and valuable feedback on the manuscript, and to Phillip Mallett, whose generous and gracious engagement with these pages helped me cultivate an idea into a book. Finally, my deepest thanks go to my parents and to Dan, Ben, and Ruth for their love and support, and for teaching me by example to value compassion and empathy.

Abbreviations

4.7	A Laodicean
AL BL	
	The British Library
BR	Thomas Hardy: A Biography Revisited
CD	Charles Darwin
CH	Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage
CL	The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy
CP	The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy
CSS	Collected Short Stories
D	The Dynasts
DCM	The Hardy Collection, Dorset County Museum
DR	Desperate Remedies
FEH	Florence Emily Hardy
<i>FFMC</i>	Far from the Madding Crowd
HE	The Hand of Ethelberta
Jude	Jude the Obscure
LEFH	Letters of Emma and Florence Hardy
LN	The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy
LW	The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy
MC	The Mayor of Casterbridge
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
PBE	A Pair of Blue Eyes
PN	The Personal Notebooks of Thomas Hardy
RN	The Return of the Native
Tess	Tess of the d'Urbervilles
TH	Thomas Hardy
THPV	Thomas Hardy's Public Voice
THR	Thomas Hardy Remembered
TT	Two on a Tower
UGT	Under the Greenwood Tree
W	The Woodlanders

References to Hardy's novels are to the Oxford World's Classics editions (when such an edition is available), except where otherwise indicated.

Contents

Acknowledgments	<i>page</i> vii
List of Abbreviations	
Introduction: Hardy's "Shifted Centre of Altruism": An Ethics of Encounter and Empathy	I
What Does It Mean to Be a Creature?	15
2 "The Only Things We Believe in Are the Sheep and the Dogs"	46
3 "Artful" Creatures, Part I: Animal Language	85
4 "Artful" Creatures, Part II: Can a Snake Have a Face?	IIO
5 "Artful" Creatures, Part III: "Can They Suffer?"	129
6 Useful Creatures: Rethinking Hardy's Humanitarianism	156
Appendix	191
Bibliography	
Index	

Introduction Hardy's "Shifted . . . Centre of Altruism": An Ethics of Encounter and Empathy

In April 1910, Thomas Hardy composed a letter to the Humanitarian League congratulating them on their twentieth anniversary — especially for their work in the defense of animals. In it he expanded upon an idea mentioned in a previous letter: the sense that "[t]he discovery of the law of evolution, which revealed that all organic creatures are of one family, shifted the centre of altruism from humanity to the whole conscious world collectively" (*LW* 373). He wrote:

Few people seem to perceive fully as yet that the most far-reaching consequence of the establishment of the common origin of all species is ethical; that it logically involved a readjustment of altruistic morals, by enlarging, as a necessity of rightness, the application of what has been called "The Golden Rule" from the area of mere mankind to that of the whole animal kingdom. Possibly Darwin himself did not quite perceive it.

While man was deemed to be a creation apart from all other creations, a secondary or tertiary morality was considered good enough to practise towards the "inferior" races; but no person who reasons nowadays can escape the trying conclusion that this is not maintainable. And though we may not at present see how the principle of equal justice all round is to be carried out in its entirety, I recognise that the League is grappling with the question. (*THPV* 311)

Hardy, too, had been wrestling with this question: what did it mean for "all organic creatures" to be "of one family"? What were the implied responsibilities of humans to these family members, to the "kindred animal" species (*CP* 557), as Hardy phrased it in his "Apology" to *Late Lyrics and Earlier* (1922)?

The draft composition of this letter shows Hardy's efforts to grasp and articulate the subject: the paper is worked with lines and arrows,

¹ The Humanitarian League, founded by Henry Salt, focused much of their attention on animal welfare. Hardy supported their work to abolish the Royal Buckhounds in 1901.

cancellations, word changes, and insertions.2 In place of "a necessity of rightness," he writes "a matter of clear right," and the sentence ending with "kingdom" moves directly to "No person who reasons can escape this trying conclusion." This phrase - in the middle of the statement about extending moral consideration - points toward a boundary, one between those who can and cannot reason, and who therefore can or cannot apply this widened sense of morality to "all organic creatures." Hardy's insertions to the letter - pointing out Darwin's possible failure to perceive this implication and explaining how the previous rationale of man as "a creation apart," which justified "a secondary or tertiary morality," was lost with the acceptance of evolutionary theory - indicate his scientific and philosophical involvement with the question. Hardy included the letter in his ghosted autobiography (published now as The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy), following it with a note that "no doubt the subject was much in his mind just now" (LW 377).3 Yet it is evident in his earlier writings that the subject had been on his mind for quite some time, although perhaps the force with which he felt it was only just coming to consciousness. For Hardy, even snakes were "blood-brethren," brothers and sisters in being.4

In Hardy's writings - especially his novels - moments of encounter between human and nonhuman animals often are highlighted by the word "creature": a term that can mean a "created thing," "a human being," or "an animal, often as distinct from a person." In one sense, the word "creature" gestures toward likeness, similarity, and kinship; in another, it draws lines of distinction and alterity. Modifiers and context can change the connotation at times in an antonymic manner. Its application may express admiration or contempt, or it may operate paradoxically by drawing upon multiple implications at once. For Hardy, the word frequently serves as a species-neutral appellation, raising and destabilizing boundaries traditionally asserted between humans and animals: boundaries based on moral sense and moral agency, language and reason, capacity to have a "face" in both a scientific and philosophical sense, and ability to suffer. Its appearance during encounters between human and nonhuman characters between, for example, Fanny Robin and the dog on the Casterbridge

² Draft to H. Salt, April 10, 1910 (DCM). The draft was composed on a single folded sheet of stationery from Hardy's favored London club, The Athenæum.

The draft and LW version of the letter (which Hardy composed from his draft) have a few further variants from the published letter: "necessity of rightness" is italicized in LW; "from the area of mere mankind" reads "beyond the area of mere mankind"; "not quite perceive it" reads "not wholly perceive it, although he alluded to it"; and "though we may not at present" reads "though I myself do not at present" (*LW* 376–377).

4 See "Drinking Song" (*CP* 905–908).

highway, or the adder and Mrs. Yeobright on Egdon Heath – levels the ground between the two, gesturing toward an extension of empathy to both in moments of close physical proximity. Hardy strongly believed in the power of empathy – or loving-kindness, as he often called it – to create a physical reaction in the reader that would give birth to a sense of moral consideration of (and obligation to) others: including, as can be seen in his letter to the Humanitarian League, nonhuman animals.

Hardy's use of "creature" to reconfigure the notion of a human-animal boundary is illustrated perhaps most clearly by the concept of the Möbius strip. In What It Means to Be Human (2011), Joanna Bourke proposes the Möbius strip as a way to reimagine a boundary: a fluid, flexuous strip of paper twisted 180 degrees and taped into a figure-eight, creating "a onesided surface, with no inside or outside; no beginning or end; no single point of entry or exit; no hierarchical ladder to clamber up or slide down."5 While the Möbius strip appears to have two sides, the nature of the figure makes it impossible to locate a single point at which one might distinguish one side from another. This method of modeling humananimal boundaries - which Bourke notes draws upon Jacques Derrida's discussion of "how supposed dichotomies are actually dependent upon each other" - bids the reader to "move beyond comparisons based on similarities and dissimilarities and inject instability and indeterminacy" into one's approach.6 In Hardy's writings, the word "creature" does exactly that, functioning as a Möbius strip within the text and quietly subverting (or at least exposing to question) expectations of what it means to be a human or an animal.

The work of this book will be to examine some of Hardy's creatures: to look at his depictions of bees, sheep, toads, dogs, heathcroppers, mallards, adders, bulls, goldfinches, slugs, calves, horses, bullfinches, pheasants, cattle, rats, pigs, rabbits, flies, donkeys, chimpanzees, parrots, starlings, pigeons, rooks, cats, and humans. What does it mean to be a creature in his writings? How did his sense of compassion inform his representations of these animals, human and nonhuman? In what ways does the encounter function as a birthplace of empathy? While the focus of the following chapters will be on Hardy's novels, especially his self-categorized "Novels of Character and Environment," excursions to his poetic work, including

6 Ibid., pp. 10-12.

⁵ Joanna Bourke, *What It Means to Be Human: Reflections from 1791 to Present* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2011), p. 9. One might picture M. C. Escher's "Möbius II" (1963) woodcut, which portrays ants crawling on a latticework version.

The Dynasts (1904–1908), and to his personal writings will supplement the exploration, reconsidering Hardy's image as a humanitarian in the context of his "grappling" with the question of "equal justice all round." The method of approach follows the emphasis on encounter, prioritizing close readings of the texts. These readings will guide two further lines of inquiry: (i) the way Hardy's work can be situated within, and seen to engage with, a variety of historical contexts (including the scientific and philosophical writings of his forerunners and contemporaries, the debates around the subject in the Victorian era, and the work of the humanitarian movement) and (ii) the extent to which it anticipates, and can be illuminated by, theoretical considerations of human-animal relations raised in twentieth- and twenty-first-century thought (especially the writings of Jacques Derrida and the emerging concept of posthumanism). Reading Hardy's creatures requires a willingness to shift one's perspective and to attend more closely to embodiment, to bodily vulnerability, and to the multiplicity of worlds and ways of being.

First and foremost, this book is about Hardy's animals. Despite the abundance of animal life in Hardy's writings, little scholarly attention has been paid to them so far. They have often been relegated to the background, regarded as part of the landscape or the larger natural world. There are a few notable exceptions. In his chapter "Hardy's Insects," Michael Irwin traces the swarms of insects that buzz and creep and crawl through the novels ("flies, crane-flies, bees, wasps, moths, butterflies, ants, beetles, grasshoppers, gnats, woodlice, caterpillars, snails and slugs") to argue that they demonstrate the same "process of change and evolution in which the human players are also trapped."7 A recent article by Ivan Kreilkamp provides a close reading of sheep in Far from the Madding Crowd (1874) to raise questions about animal agency, and another by Elisha Cohn compares Derridean and Deleuzean approaches to animals in Tess of the d'Urbervilles (1891) in order to rethink theories of animality.8 (Both Kreilkamp and Cohn note the term "creature" as significant.) Individual animals – especially the pig in Jude the Obscure (1895) – become a focus of analysis within chapters and articles on broader topics such as

See Kreilkamp's "Pitying the Sheep in Far from the Madding Crowd," Novel: A Forum on Fiction, 42.3 (2009), 474–481; and Cohn's "'No Insignificant Creature': Thomas Hardy's Ethical Turn," Nineteenth-Century Literature, 64.4 (2010), 494–520.

Michael Irwin, Reading Hardy's Landscapes (London: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 25–36 (pp. 25, 36). Irwin argues that the "thematic statement" often "grows out of some seemingly parenthetical passage of description," making "the small things 'become the big things,'" but he views the task of looking at all of Hardy's animals as "simultaneously too easy and too large" (24–25).

generic hybridity or narrative empathy. Looking further back, Hardy's humanitarianism and depictions of animal life have been put to use to argue against cruelty to animals after his lifetime: George Witter Sherman published an overview of "Thomas Hardy and the Lower Animals" in 1946 to protest the Bikini experiments, a series of nuclear weapons tests that included live animals as research subjects. Yet Hardy's works provide fertile ground for further study of animals. His depictions of animals are exceptional for his era: except in cases of humorous commentary by the narrator, he avoids personification of his animal figures, depicting them instead in specific, psychological terms — a demonstration of his involvement with the scientific developments of his day.

Any study of Hardy's animals is indebted to a foundation of work by Gillian Beer and George Levine (as well as Angelique Richardson, Phillip Mallett, and Roger Ebbatson, among others) on Hardy and Darwin and the overlap in their vision of the natural world." Hardy considered himself "among the earliest acclaimers of *The Origin of Species*" (*LW* 158). The two Victorian thinkers meet not in a pessimistic vision of the material world but rather in the close observation of the joy of being alive. As Levine explains, "ironically, even the darkest of Darwin's ideas ... are likely to fill the world with life, excitement, and strangeness, and fill art with new ways of seeing and shaping." He then transfers the idea to Hardy: "when one hears the grinding of trees competing grimly against each other for space in the thick woods of Hardy's *Woodlanders*, it is not the idea of the struggle but the startling implication that the trees have sensibilities and voices that is most surprising and most moving." It is the beauty as well as the struggle and Hardy's ability to recreate a sensory world with such

⁹ See, for example, Richard Nemesvari's "'Wherefore Is Light Given to Him That Is in Misery?' Sensationalist Tragedy, Melodramatic Modernity, and the Moral Occult (II) in *Jude the Obscure*," in *Thomas Hardy, Sensationalism, and the Melodramatic Mode* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 179–209; and Suzanne Keen's "Empathetic Hardy: Bounded, Ambassadorial, and Broadcast Strategies of Narrative Empathy," *Poetics Today*, 32.2 (Summer 2011), 349–389.

George Witter Sherman, "Thomas Hardy and the Lower Animals," *Prairie Schooner*, 20.4 (1946), 304–309.

Fiction (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983) and Open Fields: Science in Cultural Encounter (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Levine's Darwin and the Novelists: Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Richardson's collection After Darwin: Animals, Emotions, and the Mind (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013); Mallett's essays "Hardy and Philosophy," in A Companion to Thomas Hardy, ed. by Keith Wilson (West Sussex: Wiley, 2009), pp. 21–35, and "Hardy, Darwin, and The Origin of Species," in Thomas Hardy in Context, ed. by Phillip Mallett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 316–327; and Ebbatson's The Evolutionary Self: Hardy, Forster, Lawrence (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982).

George Levine, Darwin: The Writer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 117.

intensity that align him with Darwin. Beer deems this the "moment-bymoment fullness of the text," created in effect, as Levine explains, "by an astonishing and wonder-inducing attentiveness to the particularities of life, from 'ephemera' and barnacles and worms and ants and slugs to rabbits to horses to birds and grass and trees and people" which "is closely connected to an intensely ethical relation to the social and natural worlds ... each driving in his own way into sympathetic engagement with the creatures they described."13 Hardy looks at a world after Darwin with empathetic vision, but despite his feeling of continuity between the human and animal worlds, and even the animal and vegetable worlds, he is unable to find exactly how that sense of altruism should be enacted. Rather, his scenes that place humans and animals in close proximity seem to test proposed boundaries between the two: boundaries that had existed and been debated throughout history, but were brought to the forefront of Victorian consciousness by Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace's proposal of natural selection as a viable mechanism for evolution. 14 In addition to Darwin's influence, Hardy's depictions of animals suggest his engagement with other Victorian scientists and thinkers of his era, including Thomas Huxley, George Romanes, Max Müller, and Leslie Stephen.

Furthermore, this book engages with three other (overlapping) critical conversations: animal studies, posthumanism, and the discourse of "creaturely." As a relatively new field, animal studies allows disciplines from both the sciences and the humanities to contribute (each from its own unique vantage point) to the larger question of the animal. Animals – in one form or another – surround every aspect of human life: while living animals are removed increasingly from human society (except as pet or spectacle), humans depend on animals for food and clothing, as medical research models, and in a multiplicity of other ways. Studying animals, then, requires one to think about and with animals, reconsidering assumptions of human superiority and right to dominion. Even using the abbreviated terms "human" and "animal" raises problems: while the more accurate "human animal" and "nonhuman animal" are more cumbersome, they at least point to the fact that both exist within the same animal

¹³ Darwin's Plots, p. 241; Levine, "Hardy and Darwin: An Enchanting Hardy?," in A Companion to Thomas Hardy, ed. by Keith Wilson, pp. 36–53, (p. 41).

¹⁴ Rob Boddice argues that the "animal emergence of humans" was "common knowledge well before Darwin, but without doing any obvious good for other animals": the "implied ... ethic of humane treatment" did not automatically follow. See Boddice, A History of Attitudes and Behaviours toward Animals in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain: Anthropocentrism and the Emergence of Animals (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 2008), pp. 1, 317.

kingdom.¹⁵ Yet to set up all other animals as nonhuman as opposed to the human is to lump into a single "catch-all concept" an array of living creatures from toads to dogs to whales to lions to pigeons, as Derrida points out in "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)."16 It reveals the anthropocentrism built into human thought and human language. While anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism have become two watchwords for attitudes to avoid, it would be difficult for humans to view the world without human perspective (as even imagining another's perspective requires the possibility of having a mode of vision oneself first), and describing animals without some of the same language used to describe humans would present similar impossibilities. As Beer points out, "intrinsic to all discourse" is the problem that "language is anthropocentric. It places man at the centre of signification."17 Erica Fudge notes that an actual history of animals presents "impossible" difficulties, reminding readers that any "history of animals" is really a "history of human attitudes toward animals."18 Rather, it is the realization that the concept of the human has been constructed - and is not a "given" - that in turn allows a reconsideration of the status of animals.¹⁹ At stake is the very question with which Hardy grappled. Instead of focusing on likeness or difference, rethinking human-animal relations gestures toward the problem that animals have never been regarded as "the subject" or "the other" - as figures to be treated with moral obligation - within an ethical framework. What is human responsibility to animals?

Emerging alongside animal studies is the concept of posthumanism: a theoretical framework that attempts to deal with the problems of thinking about animals through a humanist perspective. As Neil Badmington points out in his collection *Posthumanism* (2000), the term is used by different people to mean different things, but it traces its origins to Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (1966), which closes with the image of man as a face in the sand,

¹⁵ For more on the danger of the term "animal," see Erica Fudge's conclusion to Animal (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), pp. 159–165; for the problems it poses "for both academic disciplines and popular discourse," see Deborah Denenholz Morse and Martin A. Danahay's introduction to Victorian Animal Dreams: Representations of Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture (Surrey: Ashgate, 2007), p. 2.

¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)," trans. by David Wills, Critical Inquiry, 28.2 (2002), 369–418 (p. 402).

¹⁷ Darwin's Plots, p. 53.

Erica Fudge, "A Left-Handed Blow: Writing the History of Animals," in *Representing Animals*, ed. by Nigel Rothfels (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), pp. 3–18 (p. 6).

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 11.

erased by a lapping wave of the sea.20 Posthumanism does not disparage all tenets of humanism but rather rethinks the framework, looking toward philosophical and ethical implications of a mode of thought that places disembodied reason and autonomy above all else. (One might note, too, that the concept of the posthuman is very different from posthumanism; the posthuman sense of being after the body, of escaping the confines of flesh and blood, is ironically more humanist than posthumanist.) Posthumanism serves as a way of rethinking humanism, and it is in light of posthumanism that the term "humanist" will appear in the following pages. As Cary Wolfe explains, posthumanism is not just "a thematics of the decentering of the human in relation to either evolutionary, ecological, or technological coordinates" but rather a discussion of "how thinking confronts that thematics, what thought has to become in face of those challenges."21 Posthumanism, he argues, forces one to "rethink our taken-for-granted modes of human experience ... by recontextualizing them in terms of the entire sensorium of other living beings and their own autopoietic ways of 'bringing forth a world.'" It requires one to "attend to the specificity of the human - its ways of being in the world, its ways of knowing, observing, and describing by ... acknowledging that [the human] is fundamentally a prosthetic creature" (by which he means an organism whose evolution is bound up with developments in technological, linguistic, and material tools things not intrinsically "human" but that have "nevertheless made the human what it is").22 To what extent might Hardy be considered "preposthumanist"? That is, to what extent do his depictions of humans and animals convey a sensibility that might be labeled as posthumanist in twenty-first-century terms?

Wolfe – and others thinking about posthumanism – often turn to Derrida's writings on animals, especially the essay "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)". Engaging with Descartes, Heidegger, Lacan, and Levinas, Derrida addresses the question of the animal in philosophy by in turn deconstructing the human. As Lynn Turner explains in *The Animal Question in Deconstruction* (2013):

Rather than rectify Descartes' denial of the capacity to respond to those beings corralled under the singular misnomer "the animal" by more equally

²⁰ Badmington's "guiding principle" in editing the collection was "to preserve difference, to leave posthumanism open both to question and to what is to come"; see Neil Badmington, ed., Posthumanism (New York: Palgrave, 2000), p. 10.

²¹ Cary Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2010), p. xvi. ²² Ibid., p. xxv.

distributing this capacity among species like a new form of identity politics – they can respond too – Derrida continues the reversals and displacements of deconstruction. He both patiently questions whether humans *can* respond and alters what response might mean, such that it does not remain a capacity that belongs to an intending subject.²³

In a debate focused on capacity and who forms the subject, Derrida inverses the schematics, placing the pressure on humans and ideas of capacity rather than on animals, and in the end linking humans and animals through incapacity, through lack of power, through the shared finitude of all living creatures: mortality and the impossibility for even humans to face death *as such*. Instead of removing "a single indivisible" human–animal boundary, his writings encourage "*limitrophy*": the complication and multiplication of boundaries, making any one decisive division between human and animal an "*asinanity*."²⁴

Furthermore, Derrida offers the idea of the "unsubstitutable singularity" of the individual. He frames "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)" with an encounter with his cat.25 Alone together in the bathroom, the cat is gazing at his naked body. In this moment, he recognizes the cat not as an "exemplar of a species called cat" but as "this irreplaceable being that one day enters my space, enters this place where it can encounter me." For Derrida, it is important to recognize that this encounter is not with a fictional or hypothetical cat, but a "real cat" - a specific animal with its own perspective, experience, and personality that cannot be replaced or replicated (not even through cloning, which would provide the copy creature with its own experience of being despite identical genetics). The cat, he argues, has "an existence that refuses to be conceptualized."26 The encounter causes him to "think through this absolute alterity of the neighbor."27 The absolute unknowability of the other, then, applies not only to the Other whose difference is defined clearly, but to one's neighbor, the other whom one encounters and must choose whether or not to treat with moral consideration. In Derrida's work - and especially this concept of the "unsubstitutable singularity" of the individual the theoretical inclinations of this book, which emerge in Chapters 4 and 5, find a home.

²³ Lynn Turner, ed., The Animal Question in Deconstruction (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 2.

²⁴ "The Animal That Therefore I Am," pp. 397, 400.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 378.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 378-379.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 380