



## Article

# Narrating Entanglement: Cixous' "Stigmata, or Job the Dog"

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**Abstract:** Cixous' "Stigmata, or Job the Dog" sits at the intersection of animal studies, autobiography, narrative voice, and philosophy. In this essay, I focus on narrative voice and trace its shifts—from human to entangled to animal. At the heart of this essay rest questions about what epistemological shifts are necessary vis-à-vis literature, such that an animal "voice" can be heard as a narrative voice. What would constitute a non-anthropocentric autobiography? What would constitute one narrated by, in this instance, an animal, specifically, a dog? In answering these questions, this essay at once grapples with philosophical-theoretical paradigms, with animal studies, with literary genre studies, and especially autobiography, and with narrative voice. I explore these questions with the aim of contributing to what Derrida has called zoopoetics and particularly to the study of non-anthropocentric autobiography.

**Keywords:** autobiography; genre; narratology; narrative voice; human; animal; anthropocentrism; entanglement; Cixous; dogs; zoopoetics

## 1. Introduction

Animals traverse the landscape of Hélène Cixous' writing. They include cats in *Messie* (1996); chickens and a three-legged dog in *Le jour où je n'étais pas là* (2000); the pigeon and the dog in *Les rêveries de la femme sauvage: Scènes primitives* (2000); the ox in "Bathsheba or the Interior Bible", the lamb and the wolf in "Love of the Wolf", the birds, especially the stork in "Unmasked!" and the donkey in "Writing Blind: Conversation with a Donkey" in *Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (1998). While the animals assume different shades of meaning depending on their specific context within the trajectory of Cixous' oeuvre, they consistently put forward questions about borders, about difference, and about alterity.

Cixous opens the section of *Stigmata* titled "From My Menagerie to Philosophy" by grappling with the difference between human and animal ethics. In that first chapter titled "Shared at Dawn", Cixous wakes up and discovers what she presumes to be a dead bird stuck in the outside of the latticework of her apartment's balcony (Cixous 1998b). Yet, she realizes, through the cat's pounce, that the bird is both not dead and not on the outside but on the inside of the latticework, and hence balcony. She puzzles over what to do: "I cannot separate the two without getting cruel" (Cixous 1998b, p. 177). That is, her wishes conflict with those of her cat, Thea's (those of the bird go unmentioned until the end. But Cixous is implicitly aligned with them). Ian Blyth and Susan Sellers, in their study of Cixous' writings, describe the scene, quoting from Cixous' texts, as follows:

Although she [Cixous] 'recognizes the rights animals have among themselves' (p. 178), as a human, Cixous still instinctually intervenes when the dead bird suddenly comes to life in her hands. Not wanting 'something to die in my house' (p. 178), she catches the bird and releases it out of the window. However, in doing this, she is faced with the anguish and 'sorrow' of Thea (p. 179), who searches in vain all day for the now missing bird. Cixous realizes that, in acting as a human, she has 'betrayed' her cat (p. 179).

This realization leads her into the position of imagining herself in Thea's place, behaving as Thea would do, becoming genuinely other. (Blyth and Sellers 2004, p. 65)

What would it mean to imagine the world from the vantage-point of the animal, in this instance, the cat? What would telling the story of the overlooked reveal?

In what follows, I examine Cixous' autobiographical essay, "Stigmata, or Job the Dog", focusing on the vantage point of the dog and delineating the experience of the borders articulated (Cixous 1998a). In so doing, I consider how this story aims to present or to narrate from a non-anthropocentric point-of-view. How, in other words, does this story and Cixous' writing suggest, as Cecilia Novero put it in an analysis of a dog in Kleist's "Beggar Woman of Locarno", a reading that is attuned to an alternative "cognitive mapping of the world" (Novero 2015, p. 492)? As Cixous states it towards the beginning of the story: "At the bottom of the bottom of all my ignorances, I must have had a prescience inaccessible to myself, that this mydog [not sic] was something else, that he *was*, much more than I, and that I do not know what a dog is nor what being a dog is" (Cixous 1998a, p. 186). In other words, what is being dog and how does Cixous' story narrate it?

## 2. Fips the Dog

In her autobiographical essay, "Stigmata, or Job the Dog", Cixous tells the tale of the dog, Fips, she had as a young child. More specifically, she shares how Fips experiences the effects of borders created by nation-states, colonization, race, class, and religious beliefs, which are incomprehensible to the animal. The story takes place in Algiers, Algeria, in a predominantly Algerian and Muslim neighborhood, that is, not in the part of town in which most of the French colonizers resided. Cixous' father was a physician and a humanitarian, who chose to live in the rather destitute neighborhood, in order to be able to offer his services to the area's residents. "The Arabs", Cixous tells us, read her family as French, that is, as colonizers. "Arab", she writes "is what one said at the time, though it was in no way the appropriate word, no one said Algerian, but rather Arab without any distinction. The Arabs. The word Arab belonged to French colonization" (Cixous 1998a, p. 183). She delineates the borders circumscribing relations or relating.

This reading of her family as French, she states, was "an absolute misreading" (Cixous 1998a, p. 183). For her, this reading compounds the fact that her family had just, as she puts it, "re-become" French after the Nazi era and World War II: "as Jews during the war [World War II and the Nazi occupation of France] we were thrown out of French nationality, we became nothing" (Cixous 1998a, p. 183). In other words, as a French Jew and as humanitarians, she and her family did not really identify as only French or with the French colonizers in Algeria. Additionally, she tells us that her family was originally Spanish on her father's side and German on her mother's side. "But the history of nationalities had in turn made us French, de-French and re-French, and we were Jewish. Yet we did not identify with any nationality. For the Arabs this jewfrenchness was a double original sin" (Cixous 1998a, p. 183). Cixous' identity thus de-stabilizes a whole range of borders—ones created by colonization, by wars, and by nation-states, and ones suggesting differences of nationality, race, class, and religion. Cixous shows us, however, how slippery the borders are between each of these categories: she sometimes fell into more than one or no category or slipped from one to the next and back or on (re-French). And as humanitarians, her father and family overstepped and overlooked boundaries determined by race and nationality and class and religion to emphasize humanitarian aid for well-being and health instead.

Fips, Cixous' dog, bears the brunt of these confusing border crossings. As long as her father is alive, her family's presence is tolerated in this neighborhood. As soon as he dies, discord ensues. Neighboring residents begin to pelt their house with rocks: "It was then that from outside the garden the hunt was unleashed against us. Our Arab neighbors encircled us in a daily siege" (Cixous 1998a,

p. 189).<sup>1</sup> Fips was kept on a chain outside the house, so that he would not attack any attackers. “Ten times a day”, Cixous tells us, “there rained on the family a hail of stones. In no time, the volleys that wounded our spirit made Fips into a mad dog” (Cixous 1998a, p. 189). As a result of the daily barrage, Fips reacted, not understanding the religious, political, and colonial sources of these tensions.<sup>2</sup>

The figure of Fips thus pushes to the forefront all the categories and borders that humans establish for themselves, which he does not understand.<sup>3</sup> Fips reveals what I have called elsewhere the animality of humans.<sup>4</sup> That is, these categories at once classify and organize peoples by nation, by religion, by race, by border. But these categories also lead to the very violence brought about by their delimitations. In other words, as Novero puts it, “[it is] the landscape of human devastation that is the product of anthropomorphic insight” (Novero 2015, p. 492), referring to human speciesist claims or perspectives. Or, as Bowker and Star argue in *Sorting Things Out*, “To Classify Is Human”.

In this essay, I examine Cixous’ “Stigmata, or Job the Dog” and how his narrative voice, if one can call it that, reveals human-animal entanglement.<sup>5</sup> In so doing, the tale contributes a multispecies narrative to the field of eco- or zoopoetics. Cixous’ essay and my analysis consider what might constitute a non-anthropocentric<sup>6</sup> or animal autobiography.<sup>7</sup> As such, it contributes to the Anthropocene-induced need to rethink epistemological and literary frameworks: the borders or genres, and their defining conventions, such as narrative voice for autobiography.<sup>8</sup> In order to capture the *multispecies* narrative, rather than say, a cyno-narrative, the notion of sympoeisis, drawing on Donna Haraway, who has proposed it in conjunction with “Sympoeisis: Becoming-With in Multispecies Muddles”, will be critical. That is, this re-framing would entail a very constitutive shift in how we define being—as entangled, as multispecies, as a muddle—and would be celebratory of this entanglement or of this becoming with and of this muddle.

### 3. Animal History—Human History: Autobiography of a Dog<sup>9</sup>

Cixous describes “Stigmata, or Job the Dog” as “an autobiographical narrative” (Cixous 1998a, p. 183). Yet whose autobiography is it? And what constitutes an autobiography? “Stigmata” begins, she states, with a *felix culpa* (blessèd wound), which will play a key role later in the text, hence the title “Stigmata”. The term, she states, comes to us from St. Augustine: she references his *Confessions*, while the term originally appeared in his *Enchiridion*. St. Augustine is, of course, a border crosser extraordinaire, as his *Confessions* reveals. The son of a pagan (who converted to Christianity on his deathbed) and a Christian, he became one of the Church Fathers of early western Christianity. He was

<sup>1</sup> See previous page for Cixous’ reasons for her use of the term.

<sup>2</sup> Fips’ behavior is narrated by Cixous and his behavior is narrated as a response to these borders.

<sup>3</sup> Dogs are, of course, territorial and thus protect a different array of borders. But these borders are not the ones on which Cixous focuses in this essay.

<sup>4</sup> By contrast, Cixous’ term humananimality or humanimal considers the fluid border between the human and the animal. Marta Segarra, Hélène Cixous’ Other Animal: The Half-Sunken Dog,” “Hélène Cixous: When the Word Is a Stage,” Special issue of *New Literary History* 37.1 (Winter 2006): 119–34. See also the work of philosopher Cora Diamond.

<sup>5</sup> Although I am aware of the terms “nonhuman animals” and “human animals”, I will use the terms “animals” and “humans” throughout this essay.

<sup>6</sup> Anthropocentrism is, of course, the focus on the human, e.g., in discussions related to the Anthropocene, the “Anthro” names that humans created climate change, which will leave a trace in the geologic record (“cene”). This human-centered viewpoint is being challenged in discussions beyond the focus on climate change, to which this article aims to contribute. As Margaret Ronda put it: “We might see *anthropos* and its related term *anthropogenic*, then, as words that speak to the non-identity and internal estrangement that accompany this species-wide agency” (Rigby 2016, p. 103).

<sup>7</sup> On animal autobiographies, see also (Colombat 1994; Dwyer 2015; Herman 2016; Huff and Haefner 2012; Middelhoff 2017).

<sup>8</sup> On this pivotal shift, see also (Braidotti 2009, pp. 526–32; 2006, pp. 197–208).

<sup>9</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, in his 1932 lecture “Die Idee der Natur-Geschichte” proposed the use of the hyphen between *Natur* (nature) and *Geschichte* (history) to underscore how each informed the other: how nature cannot be thought without (human) history and (human) history cannot be thought without nature. Or, as he puts it in *Negative Dialectics*: “It would be up to thought to see all nature [ . . . ] as history, and all history as nature” Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik, Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, vol. 6 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997) 353. *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Seabury, 1973) 359. (Adorno 1997, vol. 6, p. 353; 1973, p. 359). I use the hyphen here, in human-animal, to suggest a similar relationship or to put the human and animal into a configuration or relationship with one another.

born in Thagaste, Numidia, present-day Algeria and then part of the Roman Empire. Despite his Berber heritage, his family was Romanized and spoke only Latin at home.

In mistakenly stating that the term *felix culpa* appears in St. Augustine's *Confessions*, rather than his *Enchiridion*, Cixous refers back to or re-inscribes her text into a genealogy of the genre of autobiography. "It is an autobiographical narrative, which does not mean very much, because an autobiographical narrative is at the same time a creation" (Cixous 1998a, p. 183). Cixous dwells on the genre, and what unfolds appears to offer a rumination about animal and human autobiographies, and on the place of narrative voice in both.

Cixous focuses on the wound referred to in the term *felix culpa*, considering its appearance in Joyce, Proust (buried), Genet (founding secret), and, quoting Genet, in Rembrandt. She thinks, at first, it might be very "Catholic" (Cixous 1998a, p. 182). Then, "as it became visible in [Derrida's] 'Circonfession'", she revises this assessment and states "it wasn't Catholic. This text is about circumcision, a wound inflicted on someone who is not present at the scene of his own mutilation" (Cixous 1998a, p. 182). Of course, the person is present at the infliction of the wound. They are (and are) not cognizant or aware of the wound being inflicted. As "Stigmata" reveals by its end, it, too, is about a wound inflicted and about not being fully cognizant of what it bespeaks. As I argue in what follows, the wound in Cixous' essay, in essence, expresses the human inability to hear, see, or think a non-anthropocentric narrative.

Cixous continues on wondering: "is the fertile wound [ . . . ] part of the masculine phantasmal makeup? And is there anything analogous in women's texts? What about my own relation to the inscription on the body of psychomorphical events? I wrote a text called *Stigmata*, or *Job the dog*. Or else *The Origin of my Philosophy*. Or else *First Symptoms of Writing*. Or *The Opening of the Mouth*" (Cixous 1998a, p. 182). In his foreword to *Stigmata*, Derrida writes: "I hear it as a blessing of the *blessure*, a great poetic treatise on the scar at the origin of literary writing" (Cixous 1998a, p. ix). If this is so, what is this scar or wound at the origin of literary writing? I will come back to her question about the wound and its appearance in "Stigmata" in a moment.

First, let us return to the borders. This vexing topic rears its head in many forms across Cixous' oeuvre. In "The School of Roots", she discusses borders, grappling first with the not un-related topic of assemblings and matter (Cixous 1993, p. 128). "When I began to read Clarice [Lispector], I was enchanted by a tiny sentence in *The Stream of Life* that asked: 'And the turtles?' This is her oriflamme. The forgotten of the forgotten" (Cixous 1993, p. 130). For Cixous, the oriflamme or rallying point in the struggle, is the thing overlooked, the thing forgotten. "What would the two natures be for Clarice?" (Cixous 1993, p. 130), Cixous muses:

"The first, the one I loved deeply, is the extraction from the repressed of what we are made of, i.e., *matter*. Clarice Lispector brings back more than the turtles to our feeble memories—because we notice tortoises from time to time; she returns the ability not to forget *matter*, which we don't notice: which we live, which we are. Clarice descends the ladder to the point of returning to think over matter. We are unable to think matter because we consider it to be invisible. We are made of assemblings that hide their truth, their atomic side, from us. We dislike matter, that is, ourselves, because we are destined to matter, because anonymous matter is called: death. (Cixous 1993, p. 130)

This matter. We dislike matter. We are unable to think matter. We consider it to be invisible. Donna Haraway, in her ground-breaking study, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* argues: "It matters what matters we use to think other matters with: it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with" (Haraway 2016, p. 12). The two natures for Clarice in *The Stream of Life* might be the very matter of bringing the turtles and our disregard for matter and our assemblings as Cixous puts it, that is, our entanglement, back into the conversation.

The entanglements of human-animal suggest a need to shift how we perceive, think, and write entanglements. On the writ large, Timothy Morton states in *Hyperobjects* that in this new age of the Anthropocene, which is new historically and geologically, "we are no longer able to think history

as exclusively human [ . . . ] The thinking style (and thus the writing style) that this turn of events necessitates is one in which the normal certainties are inverted or even dissolved" (Morton 2013, p. 5). Morton argues that this non-anthropocentric thinking demands a geo-philosophy, a model put forward by Gasché, that is, one that puts earth thinking at its center (Morton 2013; Gasché 2014). On the entanglements, Haraway continues: "human beings [ . . . ] often forget how they themselves are rendered capable by and with both things and living beings" (Haraway 2016, p. 16). Doing so, she writes would mean "to re-member, to com-memorate" (Haraway 2016, p. 25). So, it would lead to a shift in thinking and remembering, a re-membering or com-memorating or restoration of beings to the web or configuration, and a return of their voice.<sup>10</sup>

Returning to Cixous' questions posed at the outset of "Stigmata" in her preamble to the tale of Fips, about whether the wound is Catholic or "part of the masculine phantasmal makeup", the wound articulates borders and, more so, border crossings, and also marks the intersection of the human and the animal and bespeaks the attempt at an animal narration. She wonders about her text, "called *Stigmata*, or *Job the dog*", which she writes could also be titled "*The Origin of my Philosophy*. Or else, *First Symptoms of Writing*" (Cixous 1998a, p. 182). Indeed, the origin of philosophy, is, de facto, if one shifts to a geo-philosophical lens, following Gasché, one that com-memorates entanglement. Cixous writes it could also be entitled: "*The Opening of the Mouth*" (Cixous 1998a, p. 182): who speaks, who narrates? And who speaks about whom? Or who narrates whom? Or, most provocatively, who narrates with what awareness of and acknowledgment of entanglement?

#### 4. Writing from the Wound—Entanglement

While Cixous' dog Fips experiences a barrage of abuse mentioned at the outset as a result of human constructed borders, Cixous regards him with admiration and shame. "I marvel, my heart is loaded with a bitter joy and with shame, and I admire this dog, with the humility that in the past I was never able to feel, because a sacred terror prevented me" (Cixous 1998a, p. 184). A marveling, a shame, a humility, a sacred terror, invoking, thusly put, the Kantian sublime, and yet she continues reworking that idealist model by disavowing any universal law. "The manifestation of Fips", Cixous continues, "is the proof that there is no universal or absolute law of effacement" (Cixous 1998a, p. 184). Paul De Man had written about "the giving and taking away of faces, with face and deface, *figure*, figuration and disfiguration" vis-à-vis autobiography in "Autobiography of Defacement" (De Man 1979, p. 926). In this essay, De Man considers prosopopoeia vis-à-vis a stone. Following De Man's description, more recently Margaret Ronda has analyzed the importance of giving a face or a voice to a figure in anthropogenic poetics (Ronda 2014, p. 104).<sup>11</sup> Cixous' recognition that Fips "is the proof that there is no universal or absolute law of effacement" challenges at once idealist philosophical models but also anthropocentric autobiographical models. Cixous continues, returning to the topic mentioned at the outset of borders. She recognizes Fips' desire to cross the borders:

Fips, you wanted so much to cross, all your forms outstretched every day to try to pass through, to shatter the walls, you wanted to break the prisons, lacerate the skins, your soul called for deliverance, never have I seen a being in such furious rebellion against the ancient fates that fix our bounds right from birth, the polices, the stupidity, *les bêtises* that have debasing powers over every creature who goes beyond. (Cixous 1998a, pp. 184–85)

<sup>10</sup> Of course, voice is often thought to related to humans as speakers of a human language. Yet this fact does not disavow the possibility of an animal voice. On this issue, see also Kári Driscoll, "An Unheard, Inhuman Music: Narrative Voice and the Question of the Animal in Kafka's 'Josephine, the Singer or the Mouse Folk,'" *Animal Narratology*, edited by Joela Jacobs, a special issue of *Humanities* 6.2, 26 (2017).

<sup>11</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the importance of the face, figure, and figuration, vis-à-vis anthropogenic poetics, read together with Bruno Latour's *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns* (2013), see also Margaret Ronda, "Anthropogenic Poetics," *Writing on the Anthropocene*, edited by Tobias and Kate Marshall, special issue of *Minnesota Review* 83 (2014): 102–11.



She recognizes his desire to cross *human* borders, the ones fixed from birth. And as the text mentions, she recognizes that these borders are “debasing”. They reduce “every creature”. Despite her expansion of the creatures impacted by borders to encompass “every creature”, what borders are experienced and how of course differs between humans and animals. But as argued in the opening section of “Stigmata” (Cixous 1998a, pp. 183–84), Cixous’ essay pinpoints the animality of humans.

Then, the text shifts: Cixous’ continues her first person point-of-view but states that Fips “is the innocent author of the signatures that inaugurated my book on my feet and my hands” (Cixous 1998a, p. 185). The narrative point of view is, in other words, entangled. Who is the author? Who is speaking? Here, Cixous’ essay recalls the entangled text in E.T.A. Hoffmann’s *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, which consists of the autobiography of the Tomcat Murr spliced together with a biography of composer Johannes Kreisler (Hoffmann 1999). In this satirical novel, slow and subtle transitions take place, too. At first, the narrative seems to shift back and forth between the two texts. Even when sentences are abruptly interrupted at a chapter’s end, and the other narrative voice continues in a new chapter, the narrative strands and voices are distinct and clear. Eventually, however, the sentences from one narrative become entangled with and flow into those of the other: a sentence left dangling at the end of one narrative (voice) and chapter is seamlessly picked up and continued in the other narrative voice and next chapter, grammar intact. A coincidence? It leads the reader to re-read, to wonder where one begins and the other ends. Entanglements abound: of genres, of human and of animal, and of narrative voices.

In previous autobiographical narratives Cixous had split the narrative voice. In *Le Livre de Promethea*, as Blyth and Sellers write, Cixous “splits her writing self in two [ . . . ] Consequently, there are not one, but two narrators in *Promethea*: ‘I’ and ‘H’” (Blyth and Sellers 2004, pp. 47–48). As Blyth and Sellers put it, “This destabilizes the very foundations of autobiography, a genre of writing which relies on the uniqueness of the writing I for its definition” (Blyth and Sellers 2004, p. 47). The hallmarks of autobiography typically include: (1) a first-person narrative; (2) a chronology of life events written and narrated retrospectively, generally late in life; and, (3) by a prominent person. Countless writers and works have, of course, thwarted each of these conventions. Gertrude Stein wrote *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, her partner. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* was told to Alex Haley. And David Eggers’ autobiography, *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, was written when he was thirty and brought him to prominence.<sup>12</sup> As to the first person narrator, as Philippe Lejeune wrote, “In order for there to be autobiography (and personal literature in general), the *author*, the *narrator* and the *protagonist* must be identical” (Lejeune 1989, p. 5). But in Cixous’ “Stigmata”, an entanglement of human and animal and thus of narrative voice appears.

The entanglement of human and animal constitutes the second section of “Stigmata” (Cixous 1998a, pp. 185–86). To be sure, it is a physical entanglement. “I have his teeth and his rage, painted on my left foot and on my hands”, Cixous writes, “I never think about it, because the little mute lips of the wounds have traveled, what remains of them on my feet and my hands is only an insensible embossment, the marks of the cries are lodged on the sensitive very sensitive membranes of my brain. I have that dog in my skull, like an unrecognizable twin” (Cixous 1998a, p. 185). The focus is not on one or the other but on both human and animal, Cixous and Fips.<sup>13</sup> This physical tangle forms the transition or shift of the second section.

The essay is, in other words, not solely about what would constitute an animal autobiography but a *multi-species* narrative (meaning here the human and the animal). Philosopher Vinciane Despret

<sup>12</sup> I am engaging neither fictional autobiographies nor biographies in this essay. And truthiness is a slippery subject anyways or not an absolute category. On the slipperiness of the autobiography genre in the early 21st-century, see also Nancy K. Miller, “The Entangled Self: Genre Bondage in the Age of the Memoir,” *PMLA* 122.2 (March 2007): 537–48 (Miller 2007).

<sup>13</sup> For more about “the ontological and generic hybridization” of animal autobiographies, see also David Herman, “Animal Autobiography: Or, Narration beyond the Human,” *Animal Narratology*, Ed. Joela Jacobs, special issue of *Humanities* 6.2 (2017).

writes of this relationship: “What is commemorated, then, is not the animal alone but the activation of two ‘becomings-with’” (Despret 2013, p. 15). Multi-species ethnographies might be useful for thinking about what would constitute a non-anthropogenic *autobiography* (Kohn 2007; Rose 1992). As mentioned, Cixous had previously written with more than one narrative voice in *The Book of Promethea*. Susan Sellers, focusing on Cixous’ autobiographies, calls this “Writing with the Voice of the Other” (Sellers 1996, p. 55).

Cixous’ narrative voice in section two, as it had done in her aforementioned autobiographical writings, shifts. “You who know my bursts of rage, the sudden moments when the door of my calm opens to give way to a very ancient furor, you do not know that then I am Fips”, Cixous writes, continuing “I leap out of myself called by his gallop that hoped to pass in a prodigious bound over the spikes of the portal, barking I follow his hope” (Cixous 1998a, p. 185). She is Fips. She leaps out of herself. She begins to bark, to adopt his (narrative) voice. She follows his hope. An intertextual reference point appears here: Derrida’s subsequent *L’Animal donc je suis*, where he plays on the double entendre of *suis*, meaning both “to be” (*être*) and “to follow” (*suivre*) (Derrida 2002; Derrida 2008). Thus, the animal that both Derrida, and here Cixous, is and follows.

Cixous follows Fips’ hope. What is this hope especially for a recognition of the entanglement? It seems to be more or rather something else. Fips, she writes, “invented invisible wings for himself, [ . . . ] belying the envelope that made him small and dog” (Cixous 1998a, p. 185). The envelope? The category? That labeled him dog? That made him small. That rendered him mute. Not audible. Not heard. The envelope. In other words: The human construct, also responsible for the borders and the walls mentioned previously. Fips manages to lift himself out of the envelope, out of these human boxes or categories.

An opening appears in the text, through the wound, through the mutual recognition. An opening. A responsibility. A response-ability, as Haraway puts it. That is, responsibility entails the ability *and* the obligation to respond. “Response-ability”, she writes, “is about both absence and presence, killing and nurturing, living and dying—and remembering who lives and who dies and how in the [ . . . ] naturalcultural history” (Haraway 2016, p. 28). This exchange is one of edification: “All that I manage to think today”, writes Cixous, “I learned from him without knowing that I was and would be his disciple while we lived tempestuously together” (Cixous 1998a, p. 185). But it is also about suffering, about inflicting wounds on one another. As Cixous put it, “At the time, the suffering that came to us from the suffering that we inflicted on ourselves each one by the other was so great” (Cixous 1998a, p. 185). This mutual recognition, in Cixous, appears in tandem with suffering or pain, physical or ethical. The latter is illustrated, for example, by how torn Cixous is between the ethics towards the bird and the cat in “Shared at Dawn”.

## 5. Non-Anthropocentric Autobiography and Animal Narration

In what I would call the last section of Cixous’ essay, she recognizes that she does not recognize the dog or dog-dom, what being a dog is, and begins to consider the dog and what constitutes being a dog. Here, then, the focus is, for the first time in the story, on what would be a dog’s narrative. “At the bottom of the bottom of all my ignorances, I must have had a prescience inaccessible to myself, that this mydog was something else, that he *was*, much more than I, and that I do not know what a dog is nor what being a dog is” (Cixous 1998a, p. 186). The narrative provides an opening for thinking what being a dog is. What follows, however, does not answer this question or what the dog might be.

Instead, the narrative shifts from the first person singular to the first person plural and tallies up the reasons why the family did not recognize him. “We did not want to give our life to the dog. We wanted the ideal dog, the all powerful, the assistance, the idea of dog in the heavens. This is how his misfortune began even before he appeared preceded by our desire” (Cixous 1998a, p. 186). The dog does not accord with the image the humans have pre-formed for and of him. In the narrative, the *idea* clearly precedes the arrival of the dog. Marta Segarra analyzes how Cixous and her brother, as children, attempt to have the dog fit their notions of him, creating a box for him, to sleep in, but also reading that box as one indicative of attempts to humanize through this imposition of ideas and will and figuratively as bespeaking human boxes and categories (Segarra 2006, p. 120). Of course, Cixous might simply be presenting the temporal

unfolding of events. Yet she also flags a philosophical quandary, taking another jab at Kantian idealism. “For our inevitable misfortune, I the child-of-man, I considered him in the beginning as a dog of man, and *bêtement* ineluctably like every child-of-man I spoke to him as we do inadvertently with foreign visitors up to the day I stopped addressing him forever” (Cixous 1998a, p. 186). The approach responsible for the misfortune, mentioned twice, is that she as a human, “child-of-man”, spoke to him “as a dog of man”. In other words, this misfortune stems, as Cixous precisely puts it, from her anthropocentric lens or her *lacking* geo-philosophical model; and, from the imposition of a model that considers Fips as a “dog of man” rather than one that considers what he is, what being a dog is. And then, rather than listen for the answer, however it might articulate itself, she never began listening and stopped addressing him.

Cixous is, in retrospect, aware of this lack. “On the one hand, he came too early: we the children were not ready, we were far from having the animal height and even from imagining that it existed, which is the trait of human immaturity” (Cixous 1998a, p. 186). Only years after his death does Cixous make “the unexpected discovery of those heights so near and so denied [ . . . ] I nearly missed it, because it took place so accidentally, it could have not taken place, and it was accomplished in an oblique form, as if in order to happen it was obliged to deceive my old vigilances, take the most cunning detour” (Cixous 1998a, p. 186). She realizes, belatedly, that another approach was called for. “I should have spoken to him. I should have, if I had been able to understand him but I thought him perhaps incapable of understanding for I was then not capable of understanding the profound animal humanity” (Cixous 1998a, p. 190). Haraway writes about how the animal exists, in such a model, “on the other side of an unbridgeable gap”:

Not least, Derrida eloquently and relentlessly reminds his readers that responsibility is never calculable. There is no formula for response; to respond is precisely not merely to react, with its fixed calculus proper to machines, logic, and—most Western philosophy has insisted—animals. In the lineage of those philosophers with and against whom Derrida struggled all his life, the Human only can respond; animals react. The Animal is forever positioned on the other side of an unbridgeable gap, a gap that reassures the Human of His excellence by the very ontological impoverishment of a life world that cannot be its own end or know its own condition.<sup>14</sup> (Haraway 2009, p. 121)

Cixous’ awareness here is key but as with Derrida’s concept of *animot/animaux*, put forward in *L’Animal que donc je suis*, as Michelle Slater has pointed out in her article on Derrida and Cixous, “[it] doesn’t necessarily ‘give speech back to animals’ but accedes to a thinking in which they are not deprived of language” (Slater 2012, p. 687). Cixous’ “Stigmata, or Job the Dog” takes the first step. It leaves us with an opening for or awareness of the need for this epistemological shift. Her essay does not answer but rather sets the stage for the question of what would constitute a non-anthropogenic autobiography or an animal’s narratological point of view. As Marta Segarra, writing about Cixous’ “Love of the Wolf” argues, Cixous raises the question: “how can we understand or translate the other’s speech without betraying it?” (Segarra 2006, p. 122). Through readings based on an epistemological shift, keenly attune to the differences in temporal and spatial relations, in being, perceiving, hearing, speaking, that is, ones committed to what Haraway celebrates as the “becoming-with”, different narrative voices could emerge.

## 6. Conclusions

Recent studies at the intersection of literary and animal studies, putting forward models that shift away from an anthropocentric lens, to some extent responding to the Anthropocene and attendant epistemological shifts, have considered zoopoetics, that is, paying attention to the voice or behavior of

<sup>14</sup> In this section, Haraway is referring to Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy, “‘Eating Well,’ or the Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques Derrida,” Translated by Peter Connor and Avital Ronell, in *Who Comes After the Subject?* Edited by Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy (New York: Routledge, 1991), 96–119 (Derrida and Nancy 1991).



non-human animals and “translating this alter-species semiotics into human discourse” (Gannon 2014, p. 91). It involves or hinges on “discovering innovative breakthroughs in [poetic] form through an attentiveness to another species’ bodily *poiesis*” (Gannon 2014, p. 91).<sup>15</sup> Scholars have carried out this type of analysis, providing careful re-readings of fiction and excavating the animal voice (Driscoll 2017; Novero 2015; Rigby 2016). While these re-readings contribute to animal studies and zoopoetics, they also reconsider and rewrite what constitutes the narrative voice, across various genres.

Re-reading Cixous’ “Stigmata, or Job the Dog”, as an autobiographical narrative whose narrative voice consists of more than one voice, of an entangled human and animal voice, suggests a new area of genre studies of autobiography, that is, the study of non-anthropocentric autobiographies. What would this narrative voice consist of? As Cixous’ essay suggests and as I argue, the narrative voice is not solely a cyno-narrative, whereby the dog speaks. The entanglement or what Cixous called “her unrecognizable twin” (Cixous 1998a, p. 196) or her “own raving twin” (Cixous 1998a, p. 200) is key. She is not one. We are never one. So it is not about shifting solely from a human to an animal narrative. We are entangled. For the study of an animal narrative or perspective, the mindfulness of the entanglement, as proposed by Cixous, and by Haraway, among others, is pivotal. It is less about a cyno-narrative and more about *multispecies* poesis or narratives or ethnographies.

This entanglement challenges not only the anthropocentric model but also the individualistic hubris of the human-centered model. Which is why Cixous’ discussion of the animal, or Haraway’s discussion of the animal, is also always one of all the other interrelations. The borders are and are not the issue. They are only problematic in that they aim to and yet cannot erase our inter-dependence, our inter-relationship, or to move beyond the notion of two independent beings to ones more entangled or, as Karen Barad put it, our intra-actions.<sup>16</sup> Mireille Calle-Gruber in her afterword to *The Hélène Cixous Reader* writes that “the human which Hélène Cixous explores has nothing to do with ‘humanism’ nor with any anthropocentrism. What she places on the scene are the perspectives of a ‘human better’ [ . . . ] by which all frontiers are crossed, the being human enters in floods and expands its others, vegetal, mineral, animal: knows itself to be dust, convolvulus (*Dedans*), butter (*ibid*), air (*L’Ange*), body-fruit (*Vivre l’orange*); recognizes its arch-vegetal kinship (*La*)” (Calle-Gruber 1994, p. 210). Again, as Haraway writes, it is about “staying with the trouble” and about “becoming kin”. If Cixous writes at the outset of the essay, “I wrote a text called *Stigmata, or Job the dog*. Or else *The Origin of My Philosophy*. Or else *First Symptoms of Writing*. Or *The Opening of the Mouth*” (Cixous 1998a, p. 182), what the wound bespeaks, what grounds this first philosophy or writing or opening of the mouth, might well be the epistemological shift or learning (of) this kinship or entanglement.

For why “Stigmata, or Job the Dog”? Job as the prophet of all three Abrahamic religions: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. By naming this shared figure, is Cixous gesturing to (unnecessary) borders (given commonalities) among religions? It is certainly possible, given Cixous’ fixation on borders throughout her writing and in this particular essay. Or is she gesturing to the story of Job, who was blessed but also blessed (in the sense of the French verb, *blessé*, to injure, to hurt, to wound), his faith tested by God, who took away Job’s protection and prosperity, and who then restored it. Is Cixous suggesting a similar testing of human faith by Fips? That is, given how Cixous depicts the plight of the family, is her story about a quest for faith’s restoration? Or, since *the dog* is named Fips but also called Job in the title, is the story about how *his* faith is tested by the humans? And if so, what then, would constitute restoration?

I read Derrida’s foreword to Cixous’ *Stigmata*, where he writes: “I hear it as a blessing of the *blessure*, a great poetic treatise on the scar at the origin of literary writing” (Cixous 1998a, p. ix) as

<sup>15</sup> Gannon, 91, quoting Aaron Moe, *Zoopoetics: Animals and the Making of Poetry Poetry* (New York: Lexington Books, 2013) (Moe 2013, p. 10).

<sup>16</sup> Karen Barad, “Meeting the Universe Halfway: Realism and Social Constructivism without Contradiction,” in *Feminism, Science and the Philosophy of Science*, Edited by L.H. Nelson and J. Nelson (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996), 161–94 (Barad 1996).

indicative of this radical (also in the sense of *radix*, root) rupture. This scar or wound at the origin of literary writing, and more, could be read as precisely bespeaking the need for a non-anthropogenic philosophy, autobiography, and narrative point of view, or for one aware of kinship and entanglement.

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