

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.¹ 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.

³ 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 one-sided 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 human–animal 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

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.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 10–12.

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

⁷ 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).

⁸ 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.

generic hybridity or narrative empathy.⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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."¹² 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.

¹⁰ George Witter Sherman, "Thomas Hardy and the Lower Animals," *Prairie Schooner*, 20.4 (1946), 304–309.

¹¹ See Beer's *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century 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).

¹² George Levine, *Darwin: The Writer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 117.

intensity that align him with Darwin. Beer deems this the “moment-by-moment 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.

¹⁸ 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 “pre-posthumanist”? 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 inverts 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.

Finally, it is important to situate this book in relation to the discourse of the “creaturely,” especially as articulated in the recent books *On Creaturely Life* (2006) by Eric Santer and *Creaturely Poetics* (2011) by Anat Pick. Santer defines “creaturely life” as “the peculiar proximity of the human to the animal at the very point of their radical difference.”²⁸ Much of what he notes about an “archive of creaturely life” could be applied to Hardy (as Kreilkamp suggests), but importantly Santer sees creaturely life as a dimension of the human, created by an overlap between biological and political forces.²⁹ He argues that the sense of the “creaturely” in a wide range of works by twentieth-century German (and mostly Jewish) writers – from Rainer Maria Rilke to Walter Benjamin to W. G. Sebald – “pertains not primarily to a sense of shared animality or shared animal suffering but to a biopolitical *animation* that distinguishes the human from the animal.”³⁰ Similarly, Julia Reinhard Lupton looks back to the writings of Franz Rosenzweig and Walter Benjamin in order to examine Caliban as creature in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. Rosenzweig identified the idea of creature as being continually under the state of transformation, as “everlastingly” created; Benjamin built upon Rosenzweig’s idea but within a political context, looking at the idea of not only the subjects of a sovereign power as creatures but also the sovereign power itself as creature, whose “self-rule is tyrannous,” to quote Lupton.³¹ In her article on *Tess*, Cohn draws upon Lupton to suggest, “[t]he word ‘creature’ for Hardy refers to an ontological condition subject to transformation by an outside agency.”³² Important to the concept of creature for Cohn’s reading of Hardy are the “universality of pain” and the inclusion of animal abjectness, creating analogous relationships between human and animal suffering.³³ In contrast to Santer and Lupton’s biopolitical readings of

²⁸ Eric Santer, *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 12.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xiii; “Pitying the Sheep,” p. 474.

³⁰ *On Creaturely Life*, p. 39. Santer specifically considers the state of exception as a site conducive for investigations into “unconscious mental life”: life “mobilized around such enigmatic signifiers that can never be fully metabolized” that “persist as loci of signifying stress” (34).

³¹ See Lupton’s “Creature Caliban,” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 51.1 (2000), 1–23 (pp. 4, 6). See also Franz Rosenzweig’s *The Star of Redemption*, trans. by Barbara E. Galli (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), pp. 129–133, and Walter Benjamin’s *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, intro. by George Steiner, trans. by John Osborne (London: Verso, 2003), p. 85.

³² “No Insignificant Creature,” p. 509; Cohn suggests that *Tess* offers a “universalizing definition of the creature as bound to an unhappy fate,” drawing upon the passage in the novel that reads, “Nature does not often say ‘See!’ to her poor creature at a time when seeing can lead to happy doing” (*Tess* 48).

³³ Santer sees humans and animals’ experience of suffering as separated by a human capacity for pleasure-in-pain, or Lacan’s idea of “jouissance”; see *On Creaturely Life*, p. 39.

“creature,” Pick’s book turns to Simone Weil and her ideas of vulnerability and “[c]ompassion for every creature” to propose a creaturely poetics: a “modality Weil names *attention* (and Walter Benjamin attentiveness) to the bodily and embodied,” given that a creature “is first and foremost a living body – material, temporal, vulnerable” but also something sacred, something created.³⁴ Creatureliness for Pick designates “bodily vulnerability,” a sense that living things are both precious and exposed to affliction. While Santer focuses on the German–Jewish discourse, Pick engages with the field of animal studies and what she calls a shift toward “creaturely thinking” with the works of Derrida, Wolfe, Cora Diamond, and J. M. Coetzee (which, one might note, overlaps with what Wolfe designates as posthumanist thinking).³⁵

In this book, the approach to the word “creature” encourages readers to consider the liminal ground between the human and the animal, the juxtaposition of kinship and alterity, and the compounding of (at times contradictory) connotations that together gesture toward the unknowability of the individual. While Cohn’s sense of a creature as being continually subject to transformation or enacted upon by outside forces does exist in Hardy’s work, Pick’s articulation of a creaturely poetics – an attention to embodiment and vulnerability, to the finitude of mortality shared by all living creatures – is more closely aligned with the reading of Hardy’s animals (human and nonhuman) to follow. Creature becomes a lens through which representations of human and animal life can be read, bringing into focus Hardy’s “shifted ... centre of altruism” on the surface of his pages. Yet at the same time creature is an impressionistic word, vague enough to allow multiple interpretations and implications simultaneously. In this way, creature aligns with Hardy’s attempt to portray his characters in a manner that maintains their complexities. Rather than forming a “scientific system of philosophy,” he argued “that the views in [his works of art] are *seemings*, provisional impressions only, used for

³⁴ Anat Pick, *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 4–5.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 7. See also *Philosophy and Animal Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), which contains essays by Wolfe, Cora Diamond, and Stanly Cavell in dialogue with two other philosophers, and J. M. Coetzee’s *The Lives of Animals* (Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Princeton University, October 15–16, 1997), <http://tannerlectures.utah.edu/lectures/documents/Coetzee99.pdf> (accessed February 1, 2013). Coetzee’s novella, originally given as part of a lecture series, is usually read as a presentation of ethical issues in relation to animals, but Diamond interprets it as the presentation of “a wounded woman” (Elizabeth Costello, the main character), who is struggling with the difficulty of thinking about the issues of animal treatment; see *Philosophy and Animal Life*, p. 49.

artistic purposes because they represent approximately the impressions of the age, and are plausible, till somebody produces better theories of the universe" (*LW* 406). In his emphasis on impressions, Hardy leaves a margin for the unknown and the unknowable, combining, one might argue, Santer's view of "creaturely" as containing "a kind of life in excess of both our mere biological life and of our life in the space of meaning" and Pick's movement toward beauty and the sacred in the vulnerability of the body.³⁶ What emerges is something more, something not quite definable, something not quite able to be known.

Chapter 1 opens with the question of what it means to be a creature in Hardy's works, looking at the difficulty the term poses to attempts toward categorization. What does it mean to be a creature – a "created thing" – after Darwin? "Creature" appears in the "Novels of Character and Environment" approximately 143 times – far less frequently than its appearance in works by his contemporaries. Hardy uses the word selectively, often during face-to-face encounters between humans and animals, but also between men and women – and even sentient and insentient entities. In these moments, he interrogates the concept of a definitive boundary between the two realms in contact.

Chapter 2 draws upon a statement made by Henry James in his review of *Far from the Madding Crowd*: "Everything human in the book strikes us as factitious and insubstantial; the only things we believe in are the sheep and the dogs."³⁷ The chapter takes James's claim seriously, offering close readings of the novel's canine and ovine narratives. The encounter between Fanny Robin and the dog on the Casterbridge highway launches a discussion of Hardy's depictions of dogs in dialogue with Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1871) to explore the possibility of moral sense in animals. Next, the chapter provides the first sustained analysis of the omitted sheep-rot chapter (a first-draft scene that he chose to leave out, borrowing imagery from it for his full draft) and its resonances in the novel, which suggest a sense of moral responsibility to all creatures, human or animal.

Following on from the discussion of moral agency and moral sense, Chapters 3, 4, and 5 will turn to three other human–animal boundaries debated by Victorians: first, the question of animal language, and by extension the capacity for reason and thought; second, the concept of having a face, a portal of emotion through expression as well as a site

³⁶ *On Creaturely Life*, p. 34.

³⁷ *Nation* (December 24, 1874), in *CH*, pp. 27–31 (p. 31).

demanding moral consideration; and third, the refocusing of the boundary not on rational, emotional, or moral capacity, but on the vulnerability of the body and the experience of suffering. Each chapter will suggest that Hardy reconfigures these traditional boundaries as Möbius strips, quietly undermining assumptions of “humanness” and pointing toward the unknowability of the individual through his use of irony, ambiguity, and humor. The chapters are framed by the idea of “artful creatures,” a quotation taken from the pig-killing scene in *Jude the Obscure*: the term implies skill, deception, and intention, capacities typically denied to animals.

Chapter 3 in particular examines the way Hardy probes the idea of language in animals, tracing the historical debates over language and its connection to abstract thought and the possession of an immortal soul. While Darwin and Romanes argued that animals possessed consciousness and reason that differed only in degree (rather than kind) from the same capacities in humans, the suggestion made by C. Lloyd Morgan that animal behavior should be described in terms of the lowest psychological faculty that could produce such action became the basis for twentieth-century behaviorism – which removed any suggestion of animal intentionality and any terminology that could also apply to humans from scientific discourse of animals. Rather than explicitly supporting or denying animal capacity for language, Hardy explores the relationship between human articulation and animal sound and the capacity for nonlinguistic codes to convey meaning in his fiction. In his poetry – in the space provided by a form that captures an element of emotion just outside the limits of human language – Hardy goes still further, directly imagining animals’ voices.

Chapter 4 turns to *The Return of the Native* (1878) to reflect on the historical, scientific, and philosophical implications of what it means to have a face, focusing on the central question of whether a snake has a face. In the novel, Hardy engages with both the pseudoscience of physiognomy, as popularized by Johann Lavater, and the groundbreaking psychological study of “expressions” in Darwin’s *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872). Yet the importance of the face in the novel is perhaps best illuminated by the writings of Emmanuel Levinas, who viewed the face as a site of moral obligation in the moment of encounter. In an encounter between the dying Mrs. Yeobright and an adder, Hardy seems to be suggesting the possibility that a snake, too, can have a face.

Chapter 5 reconfigures the human–animal boundary through Jeremy Bentham’s question, “Can they *suffer*?” While Bentham argued that

animals ought to be given some form of consideration because of their capacity to feel pain, his question raises further questions. What does it mean to feel pain? Even if animals can sense pain physically, can they perceive it mentally? This chapter examines three key scenes of animal suffering from novels across Hardy's career – the pig-killing in *Jude the Obscure* (1895), the dying game birds in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), and the honey-harvesting in *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872) – setting them in context to contemporary debates and in relation to posthumanist thought. Hardy's attention to creaturely embodiment places him as an early predecessor to posthumanist approaches.

Chapter 6 will return to Hardy's humanitarian sense of a “shifted ... centre of altruism” as actuated in his daily life. Hardy traditionally has been depicted as an animal lover and humanitarian; in his biographies, he is shown answering the door in stockinged feet because young kittens were underfoot. Yet in a letter to his wife Emma during one of her trips to Calais, Hardy wrote of drowning a litter of kittens as a routine matter. Through a case study of horses in his writings, letters, and journal entries, the chapter takes a closer look at Hardy's humanitarianism, revealing the dissonance between Hardy's principles and his sense of pragmatics and his difficulty in reconciling the two. It also rethinks his historical image as an anti-vivisectionist.

Throughout his writings, Hardy's compassion for animals is apparent. During an interview with literary critic William Archer in 1904, Hardy refuted the idea that his works were essentially pessimistic, saying, “What are my books but one plea against ‘man's inhumanity to man’ – and to woman – and to the lower animals?”³⁸ Extending “‘The Golden Rule’ from the area of mere mankind to that of the whole animal kingdom,” as Hardy's letter at the start of this introduction proposes, bids one to lean closer: to pay attention, to rethink assumptions, and to shift one's perspective.

³⁸ “Real Conversations,” in *THR*, pp. 28–37 (p. 35).