

---

## ***“Baiting Shakespeare and Staging Sackerson: Spaces of Human/Animal Entanglement in Early Modern London***

---

Danilo Caputo

**W**illiam Shakespeare’s early modern stage was a dynamic space where tragic kings and star-crossed lovers, noble savages and tame-able shrews from a broad historical and geographical spectrum coalesced to entertain theatergoers in London’s Bankside. Indeed, the theater was an anthropocentric spectacle that eschewed the brutality of bear-baiting in favor of performing the intricacies of the human psyche with a Hamlet or a Lear. However, it would be an oversight to presume that the early modern stage was devoid of animals (and inversely, that the bear-baiting pit was without humans), as humans and animals become entangled in Shakespeare’s plays--both on the stage and through the language--and exploring these spaces serves to expand our ontological understanding of what it means to be human in the early modern period. The empirical and conceptual modalities by which early modern humans engaged with animals are at odds with the present, and it is necessary that we consider these modalities rather than anachronistically assume later conceptions of human/animal relations when we discuss what it means to be human--or animal--in the early modern period. Such is the reasoning behind Erica Fudge’s statement that “to explain the human, it seems is to explain the animal; or perhaps that should be reversed: to explain the animal is to explain the human,” (6) as it is indicative of the entangled nature of human/animal relations of that time. Shakespearean drama, which predates Descartes’ axiomatic division of mind and body--human and animal--in Cartesian dualism, is replete with humans transgressing or being excluded from the inscribed

boundaries of their species for various reasons--from regressive states of drunkenness and madness, to sub-human categorization due to racial or gender difference--problematizing any notion of a human subjectivity founded on a binary opposition with the animal. Exploring these occurrences of ontological ambiguity in Shakespeare's works as well as the physical and conceptual spaces they were conceived in is the basis of this animal study. Examining these spaces of human and animal entanglement is divided into three parts: beginning with conceptions of human and animal ontologies in the early modern period and the problematics thereof, followed by an examination of performance spaces where humans and animals appeared in Shakespeare's London, and I will complete the study with a reading of King Lear that engages with the issues of human/animal entanglement addressed in the previous sections.

## I

As previously stated, the early modern England in which Shakespeare's plays were written predates René Descartes' *Discourse on the Method*, which first appeared in English translation in 1649. It is important to note this date because Descartes' hypothesis of the beast-machine is a radically different view from how Shakespeare and his contemporaries perceived animals. In his seminal essay "Why Look at Animals?" (1980) which has become a foundational text in the emerging field of Animal Studies, John Berger aptly explains the Cartesian divide between human and animal:

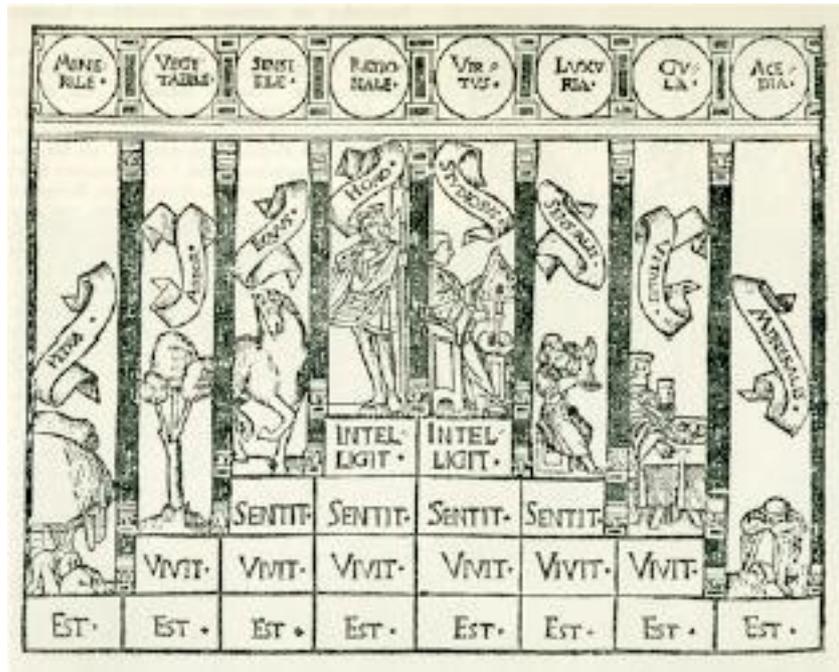
Descartes internalized, within man, the dualism implicit in the human relation to animals. In dividing absolutely body from soul, he bequeathed the body to the laws of physics and mechanics, and, since animals were soulless, the animal was reduced to the model of a machine. (255)

Treating animals as soulless automata, Descartes put into effect a new paradigm of human- animal relations that is still widely maintained today; one which reasons that the

animal is devoid of reason and thus a soul: the salient feature demarcating the human from the animal. Etymologically speaking, however, the word “animal” contradicts Descartes’ hypothesis of animal soullessness, as the word stems from the latin anima: “the animating principle in living things, the soul” (OED). Furthermore, in *Brutal Reasoning* Erica Fudge points to a dissimilar paradigm that was in place in early modern England before the mid-seventeenth century: before Descartes, early moderns would more closely adhere to a model of categorization that stems from Aristotle’s *De anima*. In this model, unlike the binary opposition of beings with souls (humans) and ones without (everything else), all living things--humans, animals, and plants-- contain at least one of three different types of soul: vegetative, sensitive, and rational:

The vegetative soul is shared by plants, animals and humans and is the cause of nutrition, growth, and reproduction: all natural--unthought--actions. The sensitive soul is possessed by animals and humans alone (plants have only the vegetative soul) and is the source of perception and movement. The rational soul houses the faculties that make up reason--including will, intellect, and intellective memory--and is found only in humans. (8)

One living in late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth century England would be less likely to consider the animal in terms of an ensouled (human) and soulless (animal) binary, and would favor something more like a hierarchical scale that recognized both commonalities and differences between various orders of being: every living thing has a soul of some kind. In fact, it looked like this “Anthropological Ladder of Degree” from Carolus Bovillus’ *De Sapiente* (1509):



Bovillus' illustration indicates that both humans and animals share vegetative and sensitive souls, but the possession of the rational soul--the capacity to reason--signifies the primary difference between humans and animals. Defining this rational soul and maintaining its anthropocentricity, however, can be a difficult matter.

Possession of a rational soul is an unstable signifier for the human. To begin with, the most apparent problem is proving that a rational soul even exists. The sensitive soul that humans and animals both share is traced back to the heart and brain--where passions and perceptions were believed to be filtered--but the rational soul is an intangible, organ-less nonentity (Fudge 11). It is no-thing. Yet it is this no-thing that is believed to control one's passions--to elevate and thus differentiate the human from the animal; an organ without body "where the lustful urges of the body are judged; and where will overrides desire in order to produce the self-controlled and truly human human" (Fudge 11). In psychoanalytic terms, it would be the superego's suppression of the id that makes one a human. But what does it mean, then, when the superego or reason cannot adequately control one's desires? When a human is driven by his or her sensitive soul rather or more so than their rational soul, does this mean that he or she is an animal? An infant does not have a developed superego and

engages with the world with its vegetative and sensitive souls. Does this mean that the infant, for lack of reason and therefore a rational soul, is not (yet) human? Is the madman human? Is the “savage” not a human? And what of the sot? Drunkenness, Fudge cites from various sources, was widely considered a “bestly vice” in the early modern period (62-67). Does drunkenness, “the alienation of the self from the self,” (63) make a human an animal?

The answers to these questions are, of course, ambiguous and often tend to be what Derrida terms carnophallogocentric. Derrida took up the question of the animal (and therefore the human) in the later part of his deconstructive pursuit, published in such works as *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2008), “Eating Well,” and *The Beast and the Sovereign* (2009), and developed his notion of the West’s logocentrism to phallogocentrism and arrived at carnophallogocentrism as a syllogism signifying the entire meaning of Western subjectivity. Representing a network of relations that Derrida highlights as the sacrificial (carno), masculine (phallo), and speaking (logo) dimensions central to constructing a human ontology, carnophallogocentrism, aptly explained by Matthew Calarco in *Zoographies*, is a “concept [of] how the metaphysics of subjectivity works to exclude not just animals from the status of being full subjects but other beings as well, in particular women, children, various minority groups, and other Others who are taken to be lacking in one or another of the basic traits of subjectivity” (131). This “lacking” that Calarco speaks of is related to the rational soul, and the subsequent marginalization of not just animals but also humans as beings without the capacity to reason shows that to be human does not necessarily depend on one’s species: humans can be-- and are--animals as well.

The idea of humans being animals also fits in with the development of English colonialism in the sixteenth century as questions arose surrounding the human status of the “savages” encountered in the New World. The growing bibliography of New Historical and Postcolonial studies has demonstrated that considering the ontology of the racial Other

was not absent from Shakespeare's dramatic works--The Tempest perhaps being the most exhaustively studied of them all. As a savage and subhuman figure in both behavior (drunkenness and lecherousness) and appearance("not honour'd with a human shape,"), Caliban is the quintessential racial Other encountered and colonized by the West on the early modern stage. Yet with such appropriation and dominion over other people and stealing their land came an ambivalence that demanded reconciliation through reason. The solution was to state that the native inhabitants of these new lands were not actually humans and possessed no sense of land ownership: "Ownership, it would seem, goes along with art and science as a truly human trait. However, it is a human trait that the natives lack, and so the natives also lack true humanity. They are beasts, so their land is not private property and cannot, by logical extension, be stolen" (Fudge 55). Prospero and Miranda make this very argument in repudiation to Caliban's claim that "this island's mine . . . which thou tak'st from me" (I.ii.332-3), responding that Caliban lacked language and a sense of self--and thus a sense of ownership--before arriving on "his" island:

*Miranda.* Abhorred slave,  
Which any print of goodness wilt not take,  
Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,  
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour  
One thing or other. When though didst not, savage,  
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like  
A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes  
With words that made them known. (I.ii.352-59)

The savage Caliban roamed about his island without purpose, gabbling brutishly--like an animal occupying a space without a sense of place--and the island was there for the West's

taking. The Virginia Company would ameliorate the seizing of the Other's land in a similar fashion, as Fudge directs us to Robert Gray's assessment of the Americas from *A Good Speed to Virginia* (1609):

yet this earth, which is mans fee-simple by deede of gift frō God, is the greater part of it possessed & wrongfully vsurped by wild beasts, and vnreasonable creatures, or by brutish sauages, which by reason of their godles ignorance, & blasphemous Idolatrie, are worse then those beasts which are of most wilde and sauage nature. (54)

Gray describes three kinds of inhabitants of the New World: "wild beasts," or animals, and the two classes of nonhuman humans, "vnreasonable creatures" and "brutish sauages." The latter two (non)humans are aligned with or even fall below the animals on the "Anthropological Ladder of Degree," as they lack rational souls and are thus excluded from full human subjectivity and proprietary rights.

Yet, problematically, there is no tangible/empirical evidence for a rational soul to prove that one human can be more human than another in the early modern period (and presently), and the carnophallogocentric ordering of beings is not just arbitrary but also incredibly exclusive, as this exemption of some--or rather, most homo sapiens from humanity was not reserved only for racial Others, but occurred domestically as well. Bruce Boehrer sums up this pattern of discrimination in Elizabethan England: "the number of fully human beings in the world must inevitably be much smaller than the number of human beings whose status as such is somehow impaired. . . one had to be white, English, Anglican, male, mature, mentally sound, and prosperous, at the very least" (18). This selective and artificial category of human constructed of and by the discourse of reason is built on shaky ontological grounds and is at constant risk of collapse, as the human par excellence was not only born as such, but also had to develop and maintain his humanness--had to control his animality through his capacity to reason. There appears to be an anxiety surrounding such maintenance, as

observed in Thomas Haywood's *Philothonista, Or, The Drunkard, Opened, Dissected, and Anatomized* (1635) with its title page depicting male drunkards in various animalized forms:



Succumbing to and impassioned by the “beastly vice,” the men (and we can tell they are men by their attire) are depicted in degenerative, animalistic form. Interesting to note is the female waitress in the upper-left corner of the image. She, unlike the men in this drunken scene-- fighting, vomiting, and generally lacking composure--has retained her human form. Her marginalized appearance, going nearly unnoticed in this raucous scene, becomes an insidious threat to the patriarchal order, as it subverts the doctrine of carnophallogocentrism which inscribes that men are more human than women. The perception of drunkenness, then, is not only of individual trans/regression, but also a signifier of imminent societal disorder and collapse. Consider the Porter’s enigmatic appearance in *Macbeth* wherein he tells Macduff, “Drink, sir, is a great provoker of three things. . . . nose-painting, sleep, and urine.

Lechery, sir, it provokes and unprovokes: it provokes the desire but it takes away the performance” (II.iii.19-22). Aside from the crass allusion to the drunkard’s paradoxical state of becoming both lecherous and unable to sexually perform, the Porter’s words elicit a sense of the becoming-animal which drunkenness also provokes. The nose-painting, sleeping, and urination are all biological or bodily effects onset by intoxication, driven by the vegetative and sensitive souls that have overtaken the rational soul’s influence over the body.

Effectively, the provocation of desire resulting from the “bestly vice” is also a lapse in human performativity, and, for some, like Cassio, can produce disastrous results.

In his scheme to ruin Othello, Iago plots to intoxicate the higher-ranking Cassio: “If I can fasten but one cup upon him / With that which he hath drunk tonight already, / He’ll be as full of quarrel and offense / As my young mistress’ dog” (II.iii.44-7). Iago equates drunkenness with beastliness as he instills Cassio full of the irrational “quarrel” and “offense” that fuels his brawl with Montano. Punishing Cassio for his lapse in appropriate human behavior, Othello strips Cassio of his rank, and the consequence for this descent into beastliness is soberingly felt as Cassio laments “Reputation, reputation, reputation! O, I have lost my reputation! I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial” (II.iii.251-3), a recognition of the lost rational soul and human reputation once inscribed on his bestial body. In correspondence with Haywood’s *Philonthonista*, Cassio bemoans the source of his dehumanization: “O God, that / men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away / their brains! that we should with joy, pleasure, revel, / and applause transform ourselves into beasts!” (II.iii.278-81) Indeed, with the provocation of lecherous and quarrelsome behavior provoked by the “bestly vice,” humans risk descending down the “Anthropological Ladder of Degree” to the level of the beast.

There is yet another--and problematic--component of the bestly vice that should be mentioned: specifically, that it is a human vice. Thomas Adams makes this point in his

Mystical Bedlam, or The World of Mad-Men (1615), as he deems the drunkard's degradation of the self from human to beast as a "voluntary madnesse," and writes that the drunkard is, "in some respect worse than beast: for few beasts will drinke more then they need, whereas madde Drunkards drinke when they haue no need, till they haue need again" (61; cit. in Fudge 64). Humans have vices; animals do not. This anthropomorphism of vice undermines the elevated status of humans over animals, and perhaps this incongruence is most readily apparent in another vice: cruelty. On cruelty, Fudge writes:

Cruelty, a vice, is a property of the human, but in being so it reveals the frailty of human reason; cruelty makes a human like a beast in that it transforms the human into something other than the rational self. . . . It is not something that an animal is capable of, and therefore the wild beast that the cruel human is transformed into is not an animal at all; it is, in fact, a human. (68)

There is no unethical mode for the animal, and therefore the depiction of human cruelty as another beastly vice is a cover-up, a sublimation for ontologically incongruous human behavior. To act inhumanely is to act humanly. Projecting these vices--drunkenness or cruelty--onto the animal is self-deconstructive in its illogical reasoning, and subverts the humanist project of positivistically distinguishing the human from the animal. The boundaries between humans and animals and the ways that humans thought about animals before the indoctrination of Cartesian dualism was less clearly demarcated in the early modern period. These boundaries were blurred as humans were susceptible to degenerating into irrational and thus bestial states, while some--or most--humans were denied full human status to begin with. And, paradoxically, humans could act inhumanely whereas animals could not, further problematizing human-animal differentiation in the discourse of reason. Moving in another direction now, I will turn from the conceptual spaces of human/animal entanglement in early modern England and consider how they were empirically observed.

## II

Among the various spaces where humans could encounter animals in early modern England, the bear-baiting arena was among the most popular. The spectacle involved a bear being tied to a stake and brutally attacked by either dogs or with a whip while it is blindfolded. It was a bloodsport popular not just with a crass or lower-class citizenship, but was even enjoyed by Queen Elizabeth I herself, as it is noted by Robert Chambers in *The Book of Days: A Miscellany of Popular Antiquities* (1883), wherein he describes how the Queen entertained some visiting French ambassadors on May 25th, 1559: “[they] were brought to court with music to dinner, and after a splendid dinner, were entertained with the baiting of bears and bulls with English dogs. The queen's grace herself, and the ambassadors, stood in the gallery looking on the pastime till six at night” (84). Bear-baiting and play-acting appealed to the same audiences and contended for spectatorship, and an attendee’s phenomenological engagement with either spectacle would be entangled with cross-signification of the other. In his study of the perceptual topography of entertainments in early modern London, Andreas Höfele’s *Stage, Stake, and Scaffold* considers Shakespeare’s London as a semiospheric space where the theater (stage), the bear-baiting arena (stake), and public execution (scaffold) work within a “powerful matrix of semiotic exchanges” (12). Within this matrix an attendee of *King Lear* would have some knowledge of the spectacle of bear-baiting, and allusions to the sport like Gloucester’s lament, “I am tied to the stake and must stand the course,” (III.vii.53) as well as his blinding at the cruel hands of Goneril and Regan would not be as easily missed then as they are likely to be today. Moreover, Höfele argues that in this scene Shakespeare “enlist[s] the intermedial support of the Bear-Garden for this ultimate excess of cruelty,” and by “invoking the violence of the Bear- Garden, Shakespeare’s stage colludes with and profits from the raw savagery of baiting” (208). A more overt reference to bear-baiting occurs in *Macbeth* as the Scottish King prepares for his

final confrontation with Macduff: “They have tied me to a stake. I cannot fly, but bearlike I must fight the course” (V.vii.1-4). Indeed, the brutality of Gloucester’s blinding and the hopeless desperation of Macbeth are enhanced by their entanglement with the visceral imagery of bear-baiting. Additionally bear-baiting becomes a topic of discussion in *Merry Wives of Windsor* as Slender attempts to impress the unwed Anne:

Slender. Why do your dogs bark so? Be there bears i’ th’ town?

Anne. I think there are, sir, I heard them talk’d of.

Slender. I love the sport well, but I shall soon quarrel at it as any man in England.

You are afraid if you see the bear loose, are you not?

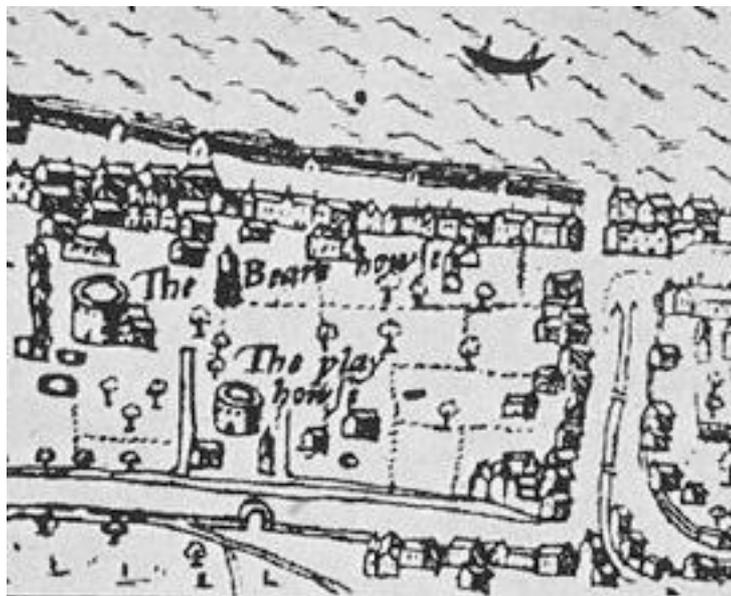
Anne. Ay indeed, sir.

Slender. That’s meat and drink to me, now. I have seen Sackerson loose twenty times, and have taken him by the chain; but I warrant you--the women have cried and shriek’d at it, that is pass’d. But women, indeed, cannot abide ‘em, they are ill-favor’d rough things. (I.ii.286-299)

As Slender boasts about attending bear-baiting matches he mentions subduing the bear Sackerson. Historical records indicate that a bear named Sackerson “performed” in the late 16th or early 17th century--approximating the first staging of *Merry Wives of Windsor* in 1597. On the one hand, this semiotic exchange of Sackerson from the pit to the stage could be seen as a cross-promotion between different forms of entertainment; on the other hand, however, this reference to bear-baiting may have worked negatively for the baiting industry, as Slender is cast as an inept and nonsensical character--one of the “idiot” suitors who fails to gain Anne’s hand in marriage. As such, Slender is perhaps a satirized parody of a bear-baiting attendee, his appearance a jab at a rival entertainment. At any rate, it is evident that both the writer and viewer of a play could be involved in the semiotic exchange between spectacles. The stage was not inoculated from the crueler entertainments of the stake or the

scaffold; it was infused with them. Contextualizing Shakespeare's plays within this matrix of spectacles is important to approximating not only the early modern Englander's phenomenological experience at the theater, but also the writer's source material and perhaps an actor's approach to performing a given scene or character.

Further entangling the early modern bear-baiting arena and theater are the structures that housed these entertainments themselves. One of the most popular places to attend a bear-baiting spectacle was the Bear Garden (also known as the Paris Garden) on London's Bankside in Southwark, the same area where one could watch a play at the Globe or the Rose theaters. Even if it is as much schematic as it is accurately geographical, John Norden's 1593 map of the area from *Speculum Britannie* still gives us some sense of the close proximity between the Bear Garden and the Rose Theater:



Moreover, Norden's map shows that both the arena and the theater bear similarities in appearance that distinguish them from the other buildings on the Bankside, and some theater historians suggest that James Burbage's initial design for The Theater was shaped by the

baiting arenas. Moreover, the similar designs of the playhouse and bearhouse becomes the folly of Wenceslaus Hollar's "Long View" of London from Southwark in 1647:



Hollar has blasphemously confused the Bear Garden for the Globe and vice versa, "a case of . . . mistaken identity which visibly seals the pact between the human stage and its animal double for all posterity" (Höfele 8). The near-identical structures of the bear-baiting arena and the theatrical stage, being in proximity of each other and drawing on the same audiences, are indeed involved in a semiotic exchange, transmitted and filtered by those who watched the spectacles as they were performed throughout the week. The failure of Hollar's "Long View" to distinguish between human and animal performance spaces reflects this entangled phenomenology as "what spectators perceived as human or as animal no longer exists in clear-cut separation; it occupies a border zone of blurring distinctions where the animal becomes uncannily familiar and the human disturbingly strange" (Höfele 15).

This zone of blurring distinctions between arenas for bear-baiting and stages for theater can be reduced yet more, as the theatrical stage itself could be a single space for viewing both humans and animals. Within the first year of the Rose Theater's accidental discovery in 1989, a bear skull was unearthed during an archeological dig at the site where Shakespeare's plays were once performed (Associated Press). The evidence suggests that aside from being a venue for a play, Philip Henslowe's Rose Theater showcased the cruel

sport of bear-baiting. Consider, then, Andrew Gurr's suggestion that the Rose, with its first stage "tacked on asymmetrically" and "its irregular positioning in the otherwise carefully surveyed ground plan suggests that it must have been built as a temporary structure" (34). This removable stage would allow for the space of the Rose to be reconfigured for baiting, and Höfele supports Gurr's claim as he points to Henslowe's later conversion of the Bear Garden into the Hope Theater:

Just such a temporary, removable stage is the salient feature of the dual-purpose Hope theater which Henslowe, twenty-seven years later, contracted the carpenter Gilbert Katherens to build on the site of the old Bear-Garden: a 'Plaiehouse fitt & convenient in all thinges, bothe for players to playe in, and for the game of Beares and Bulles to be bayted in the same' (7).

Henslowe built a single space where, depending on the day of the week, attendees could watch players play or bears baited, bringing humans and animals into the same space at different times. In some of Shakespeare's plays, however, humans and animals occupy the same space at the same time.

Albeit the scarcity of occurrences in which real animals may have shared the stage with actors in Shakespeare's plays (two of them), it is worth discussing the possibility of such events. To begin at the beginning, there is the dog Crab from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, whom William C. Carroll designates as "the most scene-stealing non-speaking role in the canon" (110). Höfele makes the case that Lance, the foolish servant of Proteus and owner of Crab would lose some of his comic effect as he "gets all tangled up in tearful perplexity" without his straight-faced and "cruel-hearted" (*Two Gentlemen*, II.iii.69) dog on the stage with him, and uses the pun on "tide" in the line "Why, he that's tied here, Crab, my dog," (II.iii.40) as an example that adds to the likelihood that a dog was on the stage (30). The other possible--and far less likely--animal on Shakespeare's stage is the bear that chases Antigonus

off the stage in the third act of *Winter's Tale*. Already a spatially remarkable play for its traversal of sixteen years, *Winter's Tale* might also traverse into the animal space of the baiting arena. Though most evidence and reason insists that what probably chases Antigonus off the stage is a man in a bearskin--and records show that Henslowe had one in his inventory—the possibility of it being a real bear is intriguing at the least.

### III

Despite these possible (or impossible) animals written for the stage, the overwhelming majority of animals we find in the theater are humans. One play in particular that appears to most consciously engage with this notion of human as animal and defy Cartesian anthropology is *King Lear*. Though no other species appears on the stage, the humans in *Lear* are constantly at odds with their own animality. Höfele states:

King Lear . . . is an exemplary site of pre-Cartesian diversity, a diversity that erodes rather than reinforces the moral binarism traditionally assumed to ground the animal imagery of the play. Rather than 'the animal,' we find various 'animalities.'

Bestialization, the notion of a moral decline from properly human conduct to subhuman depravity, from civil order to barbaric wildness, obviously plays a major role. (173)

This bestialization of the human has already been addressed in various ways throughout this essay--even using *King Lear* as an example of the intermedial relationship between bear-baiting and theater through Gloucester's blinding--but madness is so far yet to be discussed. Foucault writes in *Madness and Civilization* (1968) that madness is but "animality [that] has escaped domestication by human symbols and values; and it is animality that reveals the dark rage, the sterile madness the lie in men's hearts" (21), suggesting that madness is a dormant or repressed animalistic component of human subjectivity. *Lear* and *Edgar*, who both undergo the bestializing process of madness within the play, are prime examples of human

animals revealing both the madness and the animality within all of us on the Shakespearean stage. Early in the Folio text, Lear alludes to his animality as he discusses the forthcoming division of his kingdom amongst his daughters: "'tis our fast intent / To shake all cares and business from our age, / Conferring them on younger strengths, while we / Unburdened crawl toward death" (I.i.37-40). Crawling is a stark contrast to the upright, bipedal locomotion characteristic to the human species. Walking upright was believed to be a physical trait that proved the human's closeness to and ascendancy towards God, while crawling was seen as a base clinging to the earth. When Lear says that he will "crawl" toward death, it is an acknowledgement of his animal mortality, "a brief nod [that] hints at the animal nature of man" (Höfele 211). The human is a creature, like any other, that lives and dies--grows and decays--on the earth. Lear addresses this again as he observes a naked Edgar as Poor Tom: "Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, / bare, forked animal as thou art" (III.iv.105-6). This line is striking for two reasons. First--as Laurie Shannon brings our attention to--because it is one of only eight instances in which Shakespeare uses the word "animal" in any of his plays ("Eight Animals"). Secondly, because it subverts one of the key physical demarcations between humans and animals: "Calling man 'forked' deflates the normally valorizing accounts of upright status, accounts--from Aristotle to Aquinas to Milton--that stressed the vertical vector of the human body as enabling both a contemplative gaze and an ontological movement toward divinity" (Shannon, "Poor, Bare, Forked" 170). For Lear to "crawl" toward death, then, is to transgress the limitations of the human; to move beyond the scripted boundaries of the human as Derrida does in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*: "I move from 'the ends of man,' that is the confines of man, to 'the crossing of borders' between man and animal, to the animal itself, to the animal in me and the animal at unease with itself" (3). Man is an animal at odds with itself, inscribed with a carnophallogocentric subjectivity in order to differentiate and substantiate his ontology against the animal Other.

Through their madness, Lear and Edgar are stripped of this humanness and become animal. Lear forsakes humanity and states “I abjure all roofs and choose / to wage against the enmity o’th’ air-- / to be a comrade with the wolf and owl,” (II.ii.397) not realizing that they were already comrades; in his last lectures compiled in *The Beast and The Sovereign* (2009), Derrida unites the seemingly dichotomous forces by each’s relation to the law:

Sovereign and beast seem to have in common their being-outside-the-law. It is as though both of them were situated by definition at a distance from or above the law, in nonrespect for the absolute law, the absolute law that they make or that they are but that they do not have to respect. (17)

The law inscribes man and his limitations; it makes man and confines him. But Lear and his comrades the wolf and owl exist outside of it: both not human but something Other. Something animal. As such, Lear’s “mad” statement that “the great image of authority” is nothing but “a dog obeyed in office” (IV.vi.144) bears a certain truth. And it is only fitting that Lear’s last words at the conclusion of his crawl toward death culminates in a howl of anguish upon Cordelia’s death, “O, o, o, o,” (Q V.iii.308) followed by his own passing. These sounds of despair from Lear signify “a howl or cry of pain, so elementary as to be trans-semantic, even trans-human,” by which “the system of distinctions that make up human language dissolves into a continuum shared by living beings across the species boundaries” (Höfele 227). Lear’s anguish reverberates beyond just human pain--elevated as it transcends boundaries of being. Lear’s pain is felt if not understood not just by humans but all living creatures.

Lear’s madness does not transform him from man to beast until he finally recovers his sanity before the close of the play. Rather, his madness only enhances his already animal existence as a sovereign living outside-the-law which he retains up until his death through his trans-species howl. Yet this human-animal existence is not limited to Lear or any single

character or person. We are all human but we are all also animal. When we forget this, or try to conceal it with philosophical or religious doctrine, we are doing nothing but deceiving ourselves and propagating the carnophallogocentric discourse that has permitted the use and abuse of both humans and animals alike. Treating some animals worse than one would treat a human and treating some humans as if they were animals undermines the humanist project of promoting the wellness of all beings, which has since been reframed by the posthumanist imperative of broadening the scope of consideration beyond anthropocentric concerns. Always ahead of his time, Shakespeare's consideration of human and animal identities and relations shows that he was already deeply immersed in this entangled work.

Works Cited

- Adams, Thomas. *Mystical Bedlam, or The World of Mad-Men*. London: George Purslowe, 1615. Print.
- "Bear's Skull Found On Elizabethan Theater Site." *Associated Press*. 28 Aug 1989: n. page. Web. 5 May. 2013.  
<<http://www.apnewsarchive.com/1989/Bear-s-Skull-Found-on-Elizabethan-Theater-Site/id-2f80c4be2a27453c6d07df959b465eb7>>.
- Berger, John. "Why Look at Animals?" *The Animals Reader: The Essential Classic and Contemporary Writings*. ed. Linda Kalof and Amy Fitzgerald. Oxford: Berg, 2007. 251-261. Print.
- Boehrer, Bruce. *Shakespeare Among the Animals: Nature and Society in the Drama of Early Modern England*. New York: Palgrave, 2002. Print.
- Bovillus, Carolus. "The Anthropological Ladder of Degree." *De Sapiente*. 1509.
- Calarco, Matthew. *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida*. New York: Columbia UP, 2008. Print.
- Chambers, Robert. *The book of days, a miscellany of popular antiquities*. London: W. & R. Chambers, 1883. Print.
- Derrida, Jacques. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. NY: Fordham UP, 2008. Print.
- . *The Beast and the Sovereign: Volume 1*. trans. Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2009. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. trans. Richard Howard. New York: Vintage Books, 1988. Print.
- Fudge, Erica. *Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality, and Humanity in Early Modern England*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2006. Print.
- Gurr, Andrew. "Bears and Players: Philip Henslowe's Double Acts." *Shakespeare Bulletin*. 22 (2004): 31-41. Print.
- Heywood, Thomas. *Philoconthonista, Or, The Drunkard, Opened, Dissected, and Anatomized*. London: Robert Raworth, 1635. Print.
- Höfele, Andreas. *Stage, Stake, and Scaffold: Humans and Animals in Shakespeare's Theater*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011. Print.
- Hollar, Wenceslaus. "Long View" of London from Southwark, 1647.
- Shakespeare, William. *King Lear*. London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997. Print

- . *Macbeth*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999. Print.
- . *Othello*. New York: Penguin, 2001. Print.
- . *The Tempest*. ed. Gerald Graff and James Phelan. Boston: Bedford, 2000. Print.
- . *The Two Gentlemen from Verona*. ed. William C. Carroll. London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004. 3rd ed. Print.

Shannon, Laurie. "Poor, Bare, Forked: Animal Sovereignty, Human Negative Exceptionalism And The Natural History Of King Lear." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 60.2 (2009): 168-196. MLA International Bibliography. Web. 1 May 2013

- . "The Eight Animals In Shakespeare; Or, Before The Human." *PMLA: Publications Of The Modern Language Association Of America* 124.2 (2009): 472-479. MLA International Bibliography. Web. 1 May 2013.