What a Dog Sees: Speculative Visualities in Nonhuman Photography

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ABSTRACT

The idea of displacing humans from our position of established viewpoints is provocative but necessary in order to better face our impending extinction. If we do not expand our visualities we will not get this chance again. My research explores how nonhuman vision encourages us to confront anthropocentrism - to reconceptualise the way we see ourselves in our domination of all worldly inhabitants. I examine how we can develop ethical ways of living and interacting with others by creating a video work that imagines what it is like to see as a dog. Dogs are one of our closest companions and we have taken away their agency in almost every aspect of their lives. By looking-with dogs through a makeshift camera apparatus, I have cultivated an empathetic understanding on how they perceive the human-constructed world. Dogs know how to live well, so we should start believing them.

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Introduction

Meeting Ivy was an unexpected encounter. I had not even meant to adopt her that day. I drove two hours east of Perth, Western Australia, to a red-dirt inland town called York. I had been in contact with the ranger out there, who later told me as we walked together around the perimeter of the animal shelter compound that originally it was his job to shoot the stray dogs that roamed the surrounding bushland areas. The decimation of the native wildlife populations by domesticated species (as well as scavenging around human settlements) led to culling programmes that the ranger found as depressing as it was futile. Instead, the ranger established an animal shelter to house stray and abandoned cats and dogs. He was also in charge of exposing and shutting down neighbouring puppy mills.

I was there to meet Monty - a beautiful, black greyhound advertised on the shelter's website. Monty and I took a short introductory walk together - past an irrigation truck and a pile of tyres and around the compound. We stopped walking and for a moment, we stood together - both at odds with what to do next. Monty whimpered and avoided my gaze. It was clear that he was quite unsure of me and was keen to head back to his pen. Disappointed, I returned Monty and walked the length of the kennel; looking into the eyes of every dog I passed. "This little girl just came in four days ago, I haven't even put her up on the website yet," the ranger said. A young, tri-coloured greyhound-mix rushed up to the chain-linked kennel door and with her tail wagging, enthusiastically licked my fingers through the gaps. It was *love*.

I adopted her the next day and later named her Ivy. I learned that she was surrendered by a person from a nearby First Nations community. *Roo dogs*, as they are colloquially named, are usually sighthounds with mixed genes of various working dog breeds such as kelpie or border collie. They are bred and raised to trap kangaroos - which were considered a food source and later, a commodity to early settlers. Ivy was a free-roaming dog; owned, but not confined in any way. Because of her gentle yet suspicious temperament, had she lived during Australia's colonisation, she would have most likely opted out of hunting, preferring instead to trade affection for scraps.

I often speculate about Ivy's time on Earth before we met as it compels me to consider our unlikely companionship - the bond we've developed, the countries we've traveled to, the homes we've lived in. With the empathy she has unwittingly unlocked in me, I constantly fret over her wellbeing. Is she happy? Is she healthy? Do I provide enough stimulation? Does she miss her dog friends?

With her as my confidante and collaborator, I have produced literature review, auto-ethnography and a video work that speculates what it is like to see as a dog in everyday environments. I explored the spaces that constitute encounters in the lives of dogs such as domestic, urban, nature and play

spaces. This includes a series of field experiments that encouraged "thinking" like a dog and observed canine behaviour. I built a dog-vision camera that facilitates the communication and the sharing of perspective between the human and nonhuman. In my research, I have developed knowledges and ethics in how we treat nonhuman species. It is in the imagining of the ontological worldview of a dog that my methodological approach attempts to cultivate an attentive, empathetic regard for the nonhuman subject.

By drawing from scientific understanding of canine visual acuity, colour perception and range of vision, I attempt to foster a deeper understanding of the other. A dog's world is, after all, different from our own. My aim is to further non-anthropocentric philosophies and ponder just how ethics and politics intersect with notions of significant otherness and what can be learned from acknowledging the importance of our cohabitation with dogs. (Haraway, 2016). The remainder of this introduction will therefore focus on clarifying Haraway's notions of cohabitation and cross-species sociality that intimately link the human with the nonhuman.

Mr. Bones and the *Symphony of Smells*

In the novella *Timbuktu* by Paul Auster, poet and vagabond Willy G. Christmas invents a sensorial art installation for dogs called the *Symphony of Smells* after observing how his canine companion, Mr. Bones encounters the world. In doing so, Willy ponders the spiritual and perceptual disposition of his nonhuman companion:

> Whatever Mr. Bones knew of the world, whatever he had discovered in the way of insights or passions or ideas, he had been led to by his sense of smell [...] Was pleasure involved? Why else would it have been so difficult to wrench Mr. Bones away from the sites of certain smells? The dog was enjoying himself, that's why. He was in a state of intoxication, lost in a nasal paradise he could not bear to leave. And if, as has already been established, Willy was convinced that Mr. Bones had a soul, did it not stand to reason that a dog of such spiritual inclinations would aspire to loftier things - things not necessarily related to the needs and urgencies of his body, but spiritual things, artistic things, the immaterial hungers of the soul? [...] If art is a human activity that relies on the senses to reach that soul, did it not also stand to reason that dogs - at least dogs of Mr. Bones's calibre - would have it in them to feel a similar aesthetic impulse? Would they not, in other words, be able to appreciate art? As far as Willy knew, no one had ever thought of this before. (Auster, 1999).

Despite Willy's failed attempt at inventing a provocative artwork for dogs (the installation blew away in the wind on the wharf at Coney Island) he deduces that because dogs have around two hundred and twenty million scent receptors, while a human has only five million, there is reason to

believe that a dog's world is perceived quite differently from the one perceived by us (Auster, 1999). David Voron states in his review of Jan Westerhoff's 2020 book, *The Non-Existence of the Real World* that one's world is merely a construction of the sensations and environmental input of that organism and is therefore perceived as *real* (2021). Voron delineates that what is "perceived as real for one organism is not perceived as real for another" (2021, para. 5). If our reality is not based on fundamental truths, what assertion can be made about the central position of humans as the *all-seeing* eyes of the world? To Voron, it is *einfach* - there is no *one* truth, just a series of dependent relationships. Thus, all truths are essentially on the same level (Voron, 2021).

Despite this, what we *see* is what we deem *true* and the eyes, according to Donna Haraway, are the "active perceptual systems" that build upon the translations and ways of seeing and living in the world (1988, p. 583). Likewise, the camera produces specific accounts of visual possibilities that are incredibly detailed, *active* and "partial ways of organising worlds" (1988, p. 583). In her text *Situated Knowledges*, Haraway develops what she calls a *partial standpoint* - a framework that allows the production of situated knowledge wherein we are able to learn from nonhuman beings and entities such as "dogs, pigeons, insects, satellites and space probes" (Zylinska, 2019, p. 15) Haraway admits that she acquired the understanding of partial standpoints by walking her dogs and wondering how they encounter the world with very few retinal cells for colour perception but with an "extensive neural processing and sensory area for smells" (1988, p. 583).

Dogs are able to glean direct and meaningful information about their environment with their olfactory receptors - they can perceive changes to the atmosphere, weather conditions, their geographical location and the everyday occurrences imperceptible to humans outside their front door that determine the passage of time. A dog is able to perceive that the car usually parked outside your apartment building left very recently and that a leaf belonging to your indoor fern has a tear in it and is now producing enzymes to protect itself (Horowitz & Franks, 2020). We, on the other hand, depend on vision to construct our world - we use signs, symbols, colours and lines to act as cues, directions and gestures to develop comprehension and meaning. A human's world is a visually rich world - and vision is the most dominant way we communicate with each other. It is here that my research sits whereby vision perception is a readily accessible and instant means of communication. It makes possible the processing, measuring and constructing of our world and in turn, the appreciation of its meaning. It is through technology and our use of the photographic medium that we can begin to understand what it's like to see the world through the eyes of nonhuman beings such as dogs. Canine visual acuity, colour perception and range of vision differs from our own and by exploring a dog's vision through photography, we can measure, conceptualise and inform ourselves on our biases and positions of dominance. Considering vision is significant because as humans, what we cannot see, we perceive as less important. Without optics, the loss of nonhuman species due to extinction is unfathomable. As a whole, we do not mourn the loss of

others' habitats or conditions for survival when we are physically and conceptually insulated from the aftermath. Therefore, we cannot appreciate the meaning of catastrophe if we are unable to see it.

If this is true, what might we learn from nonhumans? How do they perceive the world and more specifically, the world in which we dominate? Dogs are tethered to humans through cohabitation and companionship and as we wander down the path to our extinction we are inevitably bringing them with us. By utilising the camera apparatus that frames our world, what might we observe from a dog's perspective? If we continue to believe that the human viewpoint is the only one that matters and petulantly refuse to change the ways in which we live, we are not blind but responsible for the destruction of all Earth's organisms.

CHAPTER 1

Facing anthropocentrism

The Anthropocene is defined as a geological epoch during which human activity is "considered to be the dominant influence on the environment, climate and ecology of the earth" (Martin, 2014, para. 2). *Anthropocentrism* therefore refers to the attitudes, values and practices that promote human interests at the expense of the wellbeing of other species and the environment (Hayward, 1997). Our constituted viewpoint gives preference to the interests of our species over others for morally arbitrary reasons and in this sense, Hayward's definition of "at the expense of nonhumans" makes anthropocentrism akin to speciesism (1997, p. 50).

As humans, we witness and participate in a human chauvinism that places economic growth as one of the "most significant causes of unsustainability and the disappearance of habitats and species" (Crist, 2015, p. 82). It is a well-known precept that if all humans lived as Western consumers, we would need four new planets to satiate our consumption demands. The striving for affluence in the industrial elites has far-reaching global impact and has seen the destruction of habitats from mining, deforestation, commercial fishing and contemporary agricultural practices (Crist & Cafaro, 2012).

Humans have for far too long considered ourselves on-top and at the revolving centre of life on Earth yet separate from the worldly material of water, soil and flesh. Nature to us, should be colonised, conquered and controlled - from bacteria to parasites; to our domesticated, pedigree companions and to the weeds on our front lawns. Scholars of philosophical and posthumanist thought have argued the consequences we face as we barrel towards our own extinction; as if

sentinel species themselves, they seem to agree on at least one point - that we are not brought *into* the world but are *from* the world (Watts, 1971).

The problem with human exceptionalism and why we need to challenge all forms of ancient and modern justifications of it is to rid ourselves of the notions that it is "natural, given, inescapable and therefore moral" (Haraway, 1978, p. 22). In her text, *Animal Sociology and a Natural Economy of the Body Politic*, Haraway focuses on the union of the political and the physiological when she determines that the structure of human groups seen as *natural forms* owe much to the social relationships of production and reproduction (1978). Haraway, guided by the principle of the *body politic,* seeks to explain just how deeply embedded human exceptionalism is in the natural sciences and technology. She states, "we have challenged our traditional assignment to the status of natural objects by becoming anti-natural in our ideology in a way which leaves the life sciences untouched by feminist needs" (1978, p. 23).

Encountering with intersectionality

In *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness,* Haraway proposes that "subjects, objects, kinds, races, species, genres and genders are the products of their relating" (2003, p. 7). This means that no organism - no subject or object - can preexist their relating as if part of an interconnected network of histories, specificities, differences and cohabitations (Haraway, 2003). What Haraway is referring to is the concept of *intersectionality*, which plays an important role in feminist theory. Intersectionality describes how the aforementioned cultural characteristics *intersect* and overlap to delineate how one encounters the world (Coaston, 2019). Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, *intersectionality* originally aimed to address issues such as discrimination, racism and structural inequality yet due to the adoption of the term in current fourth-wave feminist theory, it became an inclusive and meaningful way to discuss and put-to-practice the elimination of disparities between groups (Coaston, 2019).

To Haraway, animals groups have been "ominously ambiguous" in their position in the dogma of human and natural sciences and if we acknowledge the oppressive orders we place upon them and start allowing them to express who they are and how they see the world, "we might free nature in freeing ourselves" (1978, p. 27). Haraway's use of the term *ambiguous* imbues a sense of statelessness - of bodies politically and ethically forgotten. Never the subject nor priority, it can refer to those without voices or agency.

Agency in photography

According to Liz Wells, humans have for so long invested in the notion of *realism* in photography. This pursuit, Wells notes, is a part of an expansive regime that positions the *viewer* at the heart of our cultural identity (2015). That who *sees,* is front and centre and has shaped our ways of seeing over centuries. As humans developed their use of linear perspective in navigation, seafaring and artistic expression, the human subject became the rational-scientific centre of the world and "prime agent in seeking its meaning and establishing its order" (Wells, 2015, p. 69). Historically, this position was "unstable" and "gendered" due to the belief that the subject was an all-knowing-and-male figure opposed with the supine-nature-and-female object (2015, p. 68). Wells claims that this was driven by the "desire to exercise power and control over nature and over others" (2015, p. 69). By this notion, subjectivity in photography relates to feminist and posthumanist theories on dominance because it veils a fundamental fear that our agency (how we perceive the world and intervene in it) is at threat (2015, p. 69).

A threat indeed. It is not a stretch of the imagination as to why we cling to our position of central subject, agent, coloniser, narrator, voyeur and overseer. If it is unlikely for us to ever be uprooted from this locale, should we not be held accountable as *worldly actors* to ethically portray other species who have never been given a sense of agency in the way they are represented?

Since the advent of the culture industry, animals (including companion species) have assumed the role of stereotype in newspapers, comic strips, nature documentaries, Youtube videos and Instagram posts. Our young and furry pets have long been perceived as emotional currency and a source of entertainment through our desire to capture the latitudes of their interactions, behaviours and milestones as they grow and become our *kin.* However, reaching for our smartphone whenever our pet is displaying fascinating or amusing behaviour also perpetuates falsehoods that impact the way we perceive and interact with them. How often has one watched a video of a seemingly adorable French bulldog snoring in her sleep, that we in turn, *aww* over? The reality is that she cannot breathe adequately. French bulldogs are currently the sixth most popular dog in the United States - they can neither breed nor whelp unassisted and have a high prevalence of health problems such as vertebral malformations, respiratory disease and neurological defects (Packer, 2021). As objects of our infantalisation, we dress and accessorise our pets without affording them the respect of their *otherness.*

By contrast, the way we represent wild species in image-based media underscores their otherness in the extreme. When viewing a nature documentary, sharks are portrayed as horrifying predators, never as crucial participants in their ecosystems. A lion is often seen going in for the kill yet most of their day is spent sleeping and playing. When we remove nonhuman behaviour from its context we

unwittingly perpetuate false optics. It presents lions as being well-fed and free-to-roam but it does not reveal that their populations have become extinct in 26 countries due to human intervention (de Manuel et al., 2020). The way we represent other species in photography can influence our attitudes and contribute to the myths, policies and the destruction of not only their kind but also their habitats. Due to human activities such as tourism, nonhumans face unprecedented threats to their survival. According to Melissa Groo, our perceived separation from the other is a major contributing factor to "habitat loss, climate change, the illegal wildlife trade, overfishing and pollution" (2019, para. 2).

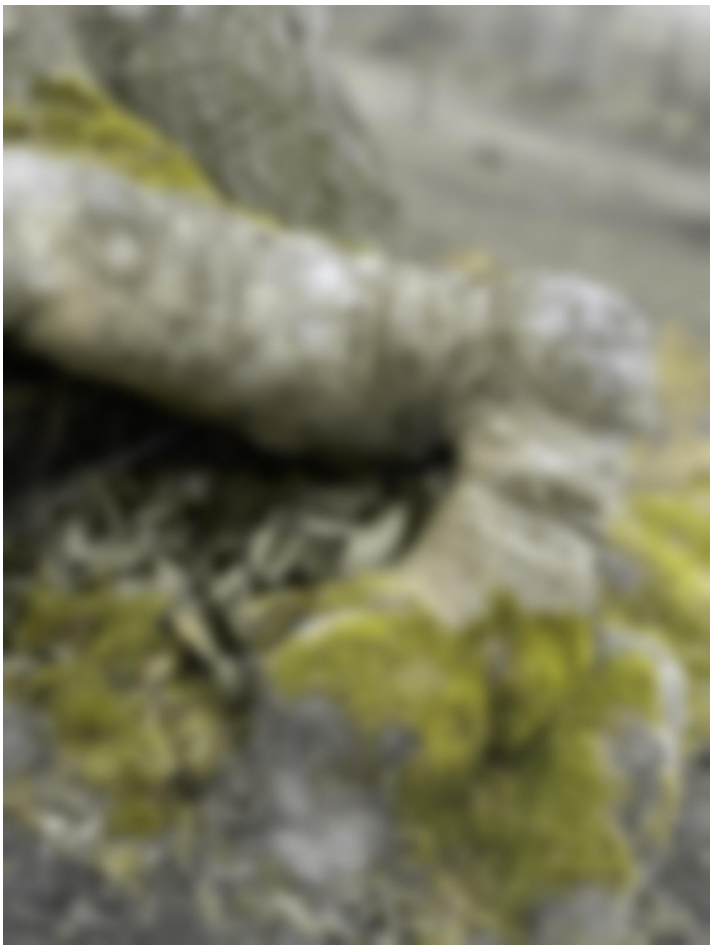

Figure 1.1, Shannon Calcott, *Dog-camera tests #1*, 2021

Here, the agency of animals intersects with materiality. Maartje Smits points out that the *material turn* is being reconsidered in feminism as it has the discursive potential to assist us in reassessing "the relation between the human and the nonhuman" (Smits, 2015, p. 36). Understanding materiality can provide a foundation for the way we approach our language, ideologies and representations of others. According to Stacy Alaimo, if nature is to matter, "we need more potent,

more complex understandings of materiality" in order to recognise the extent at which "the human is ultimately inseparable from the environment" (2010, p. 2).

In her text, *Political Animal Voices*, Eva Meijer states that "nonhuman animals have their own unique perspectives on life and their own ideas about the good life" (2017, p. 92). Humans ought to develop divergent ways of interacting with nonhumans by "respecting their agency" and enabling the very conditions in which they can "express themselves more fully" and therefore "enhance their freedom" (Meijer, 2017, p. 121). Developing new relations with nonhuman beings through the use of language (particularly visual language) can create new forms of coexistence which Meijer adds, can act as a starting point for non-anthropocentric perspectives by strengthening "common worlds" (2017, p. 93).

Furthermore, Kate Palmer Albers proposes that by departing from our "ingrained ways of seeing, imagining and operating" we can draw attention to other dimensions of lived experience of those who are nonhuman. Albers refers to the "systems, patterns, and codes" that can shape our environment as well as lead us to sensory perceptions of those environments (2018, p. 147). By this logic, the concept of agency shifts to non-representational acts of photographic creation that positions photography as a life-shaping medium (Zylinska, 2017). Much like Meijer's idea of the "common worlds", photography promises more than an index as its materiality offers a potential site for the imprinting of cohabitation and community. It is therefore our position as worldly agents of visuality that compels us to construct our world in our own image.

The real and the right to look

The eyes of others have hardly ever, until recently, factored into our perceptions or uprooted our sense of *reality*. Our agency has historically reigned supreme over less dominant cultures and species. In using such terms as "our" and "we" with regards to visuality and agency, I look to the areas of humanity that persist within European Imperial frameworks. According to Nicholas Mirzoeff, the *right to look* has been regulated throughout human civilisation particularly during the culture superiority and colonial power of Imperialism (2011). A dominant visuality has subsisted under imperialism due to its placing of lifeforms into primitive / civilised categories. The right to look as well as the right to speak and the right to constitute histories, has presented a narrow version of reality that continues to be felt today (Mirzoeff, 2011). The countervisualities of humans, nonhumans and other organisms that exist beyond this framework vigorously act against what has been maintained as *reality* (Mirzoeff, 2011). Therefore, my use of "our" and "we" refer to certain groups of humans that have inherited an ethical responsibility to those existing outside the boundaries of power.

Thus, the idea of displacing humans from our heady position of established visuality (of the world and of ourselves) is provocative because it challenges anthropocentrism in an ecological *and* cultural sense. With our primary sense - *vision* - we have utilised technologies that have narcissistically reinforced our ideologies, our way of life and therefore our dominance on the planet. By deeming what is rational and real from our central viewpoint, we have disembodied vision and limited the connections for situated knowledges (Haraway, 1988). It is therefore imperative that we seek to unify nature and culture; "the organic and the technological" as well as "modernity and postmodernity" in unexpected and imaginative ways (Haraway, 2003, p. 4).

I linger here because the camera apparatus has made it possible for us to think of photography as a way to foster intersemiotic translation with each other and with nonhumans - even though it has not always been utilised to its imaginative and ethical potential. Photography can just as much sideline histories as it can present them. It is only when image-making shifts the "distribution of the sensible" that consensual, human-centric accounts of histories are seen, enabling the silenced to speak up. (Ranciere, 2004, p. 12). Photography can therefore facilitate an understanding of how other lifeforms perceive the world. If we develop methods that allow us to speculatively imagine what it is like to see the world from nonhuman viewpoints, it inherently allows nonhumans to speak up.

Intersectional feminist theory

Feminist scholars like Haraway have long undertood that theories of biological determinism continue to capitulate our social position as well as purport our industrialist ideology of culture *against* nature. This is problematic because it assists in a denial of our responsibilities to the Earth, focusing too much on the satisfaction of our needs and cements the labor process as the fundamental human condition (Haraway, 1978). Theories born out of feminist inquiry such as Haraway's understanding of *entanglement* does not stem from the *feminine* or the "sweet and nice" but of the compulsion to understand how things work, what is at stake, "who is in the action and what might be possible" (2003, p. 7). In this context, she uses *entanglement* as a mechanism for responsibility and hope - so that "the worldly actors might somehow be accountable" as it is "possible to love the world and each other less violently" (Haraway, 2003, p. 7). Feminist perspectives in anthropology, philosophy and art have stressed principles of the organisation and care of the world that do not depend on dominance hierarchies. To accept ourselves as being *from* the world, as Alan Watts suggests, we can examine our obsession with dominance and avoid relying on *causal explanations* for societal and ecological control (Haraway, 1978). Thus, one of the ways we can begin to liberate ourselves from human exceptionalism is to embrace feminist disciplines in theory and practice that are, according to Haraway, based on social relations and not on domination (1978).

Liberatory endeavors that attempt to redistribute societal power through the means of discourse and political movements have been influenced by feminist groups throughout the 20th and 21st century. Fighting human exceptionalism as well as acknowledging those left on the fringes of ethical discourse are key issues of fourth-wave feminism. Four-wave feminism focuses on seeking greater gender-equality by confronting the marginalisation of women in society (Grady, 2018). The concept of intersectionality sets four-wave feminism apart from earlier feminist movements as it mobilises traditionallly-marginalised groups such as women of colour, First Nations and trans, although imperfectly. By utilising tools such as social media, print and contemporary art to disseminate ideas, fourth-wave feminism aims to reconfigure the lens that has historically accentuated those who get the better protection, treatment, opportunities as well as the right to speak. This also extends to nonhumans. Bioethics explored in art and research helps to disrupt the human-centric gaze which is ultimately concomitant with the heteronormative, white-and-male gaze.

If humans are the subject of culture in all of its visual representations and proliferations, what happens when we see something from a different vantage point of neither culture nor subject? By questioning the human-centric ontologies of photography, I will look towards intersectionality (and intersubjectivity) in order to expand notions of image-making, perception and visuality. If nonhuman photography is defined as "photography that is not of, by or for the human", how can we produce images that are considered non-representational? (Zylinska, 2017, p. 51).

By making images we create a mirror of our world and in doing so, reflect our perceptions. The production of art in the form of mark-making i.e painting, drawing, lithography - has historically reflected human values, beliefs and events; from worshipped deities, to scenes of daily life. Acknowledged as representations of reality, it was not until the advent of photography in the early 19th century that humans could represent an object's likeness by harnessing light and chemical processes - thus creating an indexicality and a *truthfulness* unattainable through previous artistic expressions (Sadowski, 2011). Today, as photography moves "towards ecological media theories", we have begun to question our perspective - whether the way we represent the world is a democratic, utilitarian truth or the product of our imagination (Zylinska, 2017, p. 51). Exploring nonhuman vision is the first step to reconceptualising our position in the world and encouraging us to consider ethical ways of living and interacting with other species of beings.

> Species, like all the old and important words, is promiscuous [in] the visual register. The Latin *specere* is at the root of things here, with its tones of "to look" and "to behold". In logic, species refers to a mental impression or idea, strengthening the notion that thinking

> and seeing are clones. Species is about the dance linking kin and kind. (Haraway, 2007, p. 17).

So, how do we begin to consider nonhuman vision in terms of ethics? By way of her auto-ethnographies, Haraway shows us the way forward...

Encountering nonhumans

In the documentary *Storytelling for Earthly Survival* (2016) Haraway fondly refers to her companion - an Australian shepherd called Ms Cayenne Pepper with affection and mutual understanding. A partnership in which she believes signifies "a nasty developmental infection called love" (Haraway, 2003, p. 3). Reflecting on her companionship with Ms Cayenne, Haraway explores co-evolution, bioethics and biopolitics through the teasing of transfection - of viruses in body fluids, bacteria and archaea to allow for "the development of multicellular life" (Turner, 2019, para. 41). Haraway argues that by touching each other, we leave molecular records which coalesce with the same basic mechanism of what evolutionary biologists call *symbiogenesis*. Haraway flirtatiously suggests that Ms Cayenne's genome has somehow become lodged in her own. Thus, the sharing of traces becomes an allegory of not only the relationship Haraway has with her dog but of the visual, photographic way in which we communicate with each other (Turner, 2019).

Haraway suggests two principles that encourage *learning from* and *facing* the other in which she refers to as "staying in trouble" namely, learning to live well with nonhumans as kin (Haraway, 2016). Coexisting with dogs has provided humans with a companionship that rivals most other species. As dogs share our homes, cities, travel plans and daily routines, they become witnesses to the way we live. This is compelling because by way of shared histories, we develop a unique and beneficial bond with them.

Kinship

At the centre of *kinship* lies a responsibility towards the treatment of others that impacts the world. The way we relate to each other - to other species, the land and its natural resources - forms the capacity to imagine and care for other worlds and in a sense, offers a solution to the problem of anthropocentrism (Haraway, 2003). The anthropocene does not leave enough room for other species to share the planet with humans because exceptionalism "separates anthropos from the rest of the living world" (Wright, 2014, p. 279). We fixate on human "subjectivity, consciousness and rationality" and according to Kate Wright, we're blinded by our narcissism to the "multiplicity of becoming-withs" in the relatedness of the world "worlding" itself (2014, p. 279).

Acknowledging the relations between human and dog; to thunderstorms, to raindrops on asphalt, enables embodied ways of knowing that does not rely on rational thought and yet it encourages ethical responses to our environment (Wright, 2014). *Becoming-with* nonhumans is to look-*with* nonhumans - it is an ecology where all issues such as "biodiversity" and "extinction" become "epistemic" (2014, p. 280). To Wright, the way we encounter others and form kinships enables us to develop ecological imagination and may well "enhance our ability" to respond to anthropocenic conditions ethically (2014, p. 280). Kinship, in essence, develops our capacity for "imagining and caring for other worlds" and with it, our sense of the world. (Haraway, 2016, para. 11).

To consider nonhuman beings as *other worlds,* as Haraway does, is to acknowledge the other and in doing so, the possibilities that interspecies kinship can impart. Making *kin* according to Haraway is not necessarily biologically-determined and can refer to connections with nonhuman beings that have lasting and consequential relatedness (2003).

If there is anything that Haraway has taught us about the cyborg, it is that organisms of various shapes and combinations are fundamentally interactive, modifying and self-evolving. This idea forms a basis of her argument on the relations between humans and dogs in which she proposes that as companion species, we have co-evolved over time. This makes us "historically constituted beings" and through a shared domestication, we have created significant others (Handleman, 2007, p. 254). In looking at species as *otherness*, Haraway pursues the connection between culture and genetics by presenting a ceaseless and interactive cosmology that explores the co-constitution of species that changes through time. To her, this inquiry is equally an ethical one - one that insists on "the relation between dog and person" as dogs should be "perceived and respected as *doggy* in [their] own right" just as human qualities in a person are defined, afforded and appreciated. (Handleman, 2007, p. 255).

Coexisting in Australia's Outback

Before domesticated dogs were introduced in Australia, the dingo related so closely with First Nations people that some were given skin names within certain kinship systems (Hayes, 2017). Groups such as the Warlpiri people have considered dogs to be much more like friends since technological shifts in hunting no longer require a dog's labour. According to veterinarian Stephen Cutter, the change of relationship between human and dog among the Warlpiri people differs dramatically from the Western Imperial complex that determines nonhumans as possessions (Hayes, 2017). Cutter states that "if the dog chooses to change houses, if he decides he really likes your neighbour's house, you might be a little sad but it's ultimately their choice" (2017, para. 7). What Cutter is describing is how inextricably entangled we are with dogs. They are embedded in

the stories and traditions of our class formations and labour practices as well as racial distinctions that make up the boundless histories of coexistence (Haraway, 2003).

Since colonisation, inland regions such as the Wheatbelt in Western Australia (Ivy's birthplace) have been overwhelmed by the populating of domesticated dogs because they are generally more fertile and breed younger and more frequently than dingoes. Because of their shared histories with humans, domesticated dogs tend to gather around First Nations communities; incentivised by their close proximity, they are more likely to maintain generational cycles of scavenging. This leads to the undernourishment, cannibalism and disease of their kind and consequently to the breakdown of their relations with humans (Hayes, 2017).

Moreover, people from cities are stationed in rural communities to work in local mines, schools, health or art centres and frequently adopt local dogs for companionship or security. However, it is common practice that a dog is abandoned once its human is no longer stationed there. This can leave a dog in a vulnerable situation - not only has she developed a dependency on her human's companionship, affection and distribution of resources but it also contributes to the loss of connection she has with her pack. In a sense, a dog's abandonment at the hands of a human can cause a rupture in the order of kinship as well as the ability to work future social relations (Hayes, 2017). These are contributing factors that determine how human agency affects other living beings and highlights the urgent ethical responsibility kinship invokes (Haraway, 2003). Kinship means to share accountabilities and obligations as well as pleasures, mutual attention and respect:

> The deep pleasure, even joy, of sharing life with a different being, one whose thoughts, feelings, reactions, and probably survival needs are different from ours. And somehow in order for all the species in this 'band' to thrive, we have to learn to understand and respect those things. (Weisser, 2001, as cited in Haraway, 2003, p. 37).

CHAPTER 2

Whenever I decide to take a photo of Ivy, she averts her gaze and denies the camera its image. It is as if she suspects that I'm trying to take something away from her. She doesn't know what it *is* exactly, but she instinctively knows it's hers and by my asking for it, coaxing it, I'm stealing from her. It's as if each time the shutter releases, she senses that she's lost a piece of herself; that she is even *less* than before.

Is she aware that I carry images of her wherever I go? Does she know that I have, in a sense, archived her life as if beetles in a display cabinet? That I have catalogued her existence in a way that fixates on

her daily encounters, chronicling her adventures that span across life chapters, landscapes and continents? Does Ivy recognise herself in the dozens of videos I've recorded of her playing with other members of her pack? And does she recognise her own bark - a sound occurring once in a wolf's moon when she's particularly exhilarated? Does she know that the sound of her bark is memorialised in code; ready and waiting for me to replay in my grief once she has died?

Figure 1.2, Shannon Calcott, *Dog-camera tests #2*, 2021.

What a dog sees

It could be argued that a dog shares its gaze uniquely with humans. Holding its gaze with its own kind is not evident in observation studies which leads us to believe that dogs who give eye contact are only responding to human behavioural cues (Kaminski et al., 2009). A dog's gaze can communicate her needs and desires and soften the hearts of even the steeliest, most allergic of humans. She asks for you to share your material and emotional resources, and to solve problems for her such as opening doors and finding water so she does not have to drink out of your vase. Humans who share their lives with companion species such as dogs, allegorically understand the

exchange of a look, the silent gesture and the mental tug-o-war that occurs between them while trying to figure out just exactly what their companion is trying to convey. Dogs, on the other hand, are much more adept at interpreting our gestures (Kaminski et al., 2009).

And yet when it comes to vision, the way dogs and humans optically perceive the world has marked differences. Firstly, colour perception depends on how many photoreceptor cells (cones) are located in the periphery of the retina of any given species, determining what is detected in one's visual spectrum (Kaminski et al., 2009). A dog's eye does not detect red hues as they lack the cone that is responsible for its perception. Therefore dogs see along a spectrum of blue and yellow that is not dissimilar to what is perceived by a human with red-green colourblindness (called deuteranopia). Physical objects and properties that reflect light ie. traffic lights, street signs, a blade of grass, a frisbee, would instead appear in muted tones of yellow, grey and brown.

Secondly, dogs have 20 percent of the expectant visual acuity of humans. One day while out hiking, Ivy inquisitively approached a snake sunbathing lazily on a path - inspecting it closely with her nose.
Provoked, the snake striked, giving Ivy a fright. For several months afterwards, Ivy would gingerly take a wide berth around anything she recognised as "snake-like", which was most often than not abandoned bicycle chains. Edges, shadows and objects of voluminous mass are visually perceptible to dogs but the nuances and richness of detail are left up to their sense of smell. It is as if dogs would appreciate the deep plunges and curved forms of a Georgia O'Keeffe painting yet miss the subtleties and elaborate spectacle of a Carravaggio. By detecting the similar visual signs of colour and form yet missing the subtleties of detail, Ivy's world was now full of snakes.

Although, when it comes to spatial awareness, a dog's range of vision is 240 degrees as opposed to our 180 degrees. Their sense of periphery evolved with their pack mentality and the ability to scan larger spatial areas for prey (Offord, 2021). A dog's ability to visually detect fast-moving objects is by-and-large a remnant of their pre-domestication and is related to their kill-drive. What would look like a blur to a human, is slowed down to precision by a dog's visual processing. It seems as though dogs perceive time differently.

Extinction in the anthropocene

In the post-apocalyptic world of Hayao Miyazaki's 1984 film *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind,* a vast, poisonous forest persists on the peripheries of surviving human settlements as a reminder of the ecological impact spurred on by industrialisation and nuclear war. What is seen as a regular threat to the few human descendants, the forest is portrayed as a sentient and volatile ecosystem that rigorously fights human invaders by deploying an army of giant insects. Moreover, the forest

produces a miasmic air that is toxic to humans. It takes Nausicaä - a princess of a farming village who is remarkably perceptive and gentle to humans and nonhumans alike, to realise that the forest is not the enemy but in the midst of a centuries-long process. She discovers that the poisonous vapour produced by the forest is indeed the residue of human-induced ecological destruction. The forest is attempting to purify the earth by synthesising the waste into crystallised minerals. Nausicaä is the only human to really *see* what the forest is and is dismayed by the perpetual fear of her kind that often results in malicious violence against the forest's nonhuman inhabitants.

While taking plant samples under its canopy, Nausicaä discovers the body of an Ohmu - a giant invertebrate whose eyes consist of an exoskeleton highly-prized for its material substance as it is used for tools and weaponry. As Nausicaä pushes out one of the Ohmu's eye caps, we see her figure reflected on its surface. In a later scene, we learn that an Ohmu's eyes glow red with rage when one of its kind is physically threatened. *Eyes* it seems, (and specifically the witnessing of human action by nonhumans) is a repetitive theme throughout Miyazaki's classic - one that invites a commentary of ethics relating to the impact of human agency. Vision and perspective become motifs as a means for ethics in the same way they are emblematic for Zylinska in her photographic research. Throughout the film, Nausicaä finds herself in various environments that challenge her central viewpoint. Her mode of transport is a wind-powered albatross-winged glider that enables her the means of escape, to spot danger from afar and to find lost herds of Ohmus. By gaining a bird's-eye view she discovers that the forest is a living and breathing organism and not the cause of the seemingly inhabitable land. As Nausicaä sees herself reflected back in the eyes of the creatures, she witnesses the destructive forces of human civilisation. By changing her perspective and looking-with, Nausicaä steps imaginatively into the other's skin and thus calibrates a sense of empathy. Empathy is the art of perspective-taking. Empathy takes us beyond ourselves and with it, we participate in the experiences and feelings that are not our own. Empathy can therefore carry us into feather and fur and into nonhuman minds, although imperfectly. By seeing ourselves reflecting back through the eyes of others, we can imagine the aftermath of our actions and of the possible futures beyond our extinction. Encountering with empathy makes possible the practice of compassion and ultimately tasks humans with ethical responsibility.

In the 2018 book *After Extinction*, Richard Grusin states that the anthropocene premediates the disappearance of humans as a species as it already periodises human presence on Earth. It alludes to a future world in which we have been reduced to a "lithic layer not much thicker than a cigarette paper" (Zalasiewicz, 2008, as cited in Zylinska, 2018 p. 54). The planet's sixth mass extinction is quite unlike the previous five as it is "attributed to the agency of humans" and to the "agency of nonhuman processes set in motion by humans" such as technologies "of industrial capitalism and globalisation that continue to operate" (Grusin, 2018, p. 2).

According to Zylinska, extinction has now entered a "conceptual, visual, and experiential horizon" that can be "sensed" and "imagined" in the "here and now" (2018, p. 51). Humans have always lived in a time "after extinction" and are therefore "under its horizon" (2018, p. 52). However, despite extinction being a bio-geological fact, we as a species have yet to fully embrace the concept due to our cognitive inability to perceive large-scale change (Zylinska, 2018). This, coupled with the "apparent stability of the current state of the world" plays a major factor in obscuring our senses (Hanski, 2008, as cited in Zylinska, p. 52). Moreover, we lack the ground on which to mobilise global, sociopolitical reform that scrutinises our relationship with the environment as well as acknowledge our active role in established naturecultures (Emmelhainz, 2015). Thus, we have failed to establish a "responsible long-term response to climate change" (Zylinska, 2018, p. 52). In the anthropocene, not only do we face human extinction but are responsible for causing the extinctions of others. This factor, as Claire Colebrook points out, could possibly annihilate every quality that makes us human (2014). The consequences of biodiversity loss and changing ecosystem conditions does not descend evenly across society - affecting certain species and human communities more than others (UNFCCC Report, 2019). It is therefore imperative that humans expand their perceptions in which to *think* extinction, that is, utilise policies, practices and technologies in which to better reconcile such events. (Amon, 2018). It is not enough just to see the data and the desensitised images of the washed-up, plastic-filled bodies of animals. We need to shift from our central position as agents and truly recognise what loss looks like. Living under the horizon of extinction therefore presents an ethical task because we must encounter the world without "turning our gaze away from it" (Zylinska, 2018, p. 53).

Presenting nonhuman visualities

And yet we do turn our gaze. Humans and nonhumans have become urgently interconnected by way of human practices that steadily decompose our relations. Human population growth and industrialised expansion perpetuate encroached living conditions for humans and nonhumans alike and our agricultural practices harbor the cross-contamination of disease between organisms. However, the exploitative treatment of nonhumans by human hands and minds is limited to a number of people. It is "unhelpful" to criticise humanity as a whole when for instance, many "indigenous societies were not anthropocentric" (Kopnina et al., 2018, p. 112). It is therefore helpful to approach "the ideology of anthropocentrism" as an ethical failing that does not "necessarily apply to all humanity" in the same way that agency does not necessarily apply to all humans. Sexism and racism are also ethical failings that illustrate "discriminating practices" and deny a sense of agency (Kopnina et al, 2018, p. 122). Thus, "people who live outside of the industrial market system" have less responsibilities than others (2018, p. 118). Conversely, those of us from Anglo-Imperial nations of the Western world are so conceptually-removed from our domination and the anthropocentric practices of nonhumans that we are able to find more

aesthetically-pleasing shapes in the meat section of the supermarket than in a Picasso painting. As a species, we are aware of climate change. We soberly comment on heat waves and early rain; we attend funerals for melted glaciers, we know that glyphosate can be found in breast milk now and that water is increasingly privatised. We still sit down to watch multimillion-dollar-budget sci-fi blockbusters that predict "far-off" dystopian futures, lacking in any attempt to imagine a way in which we can reconcile human life with ecology (Grusin, 2018).

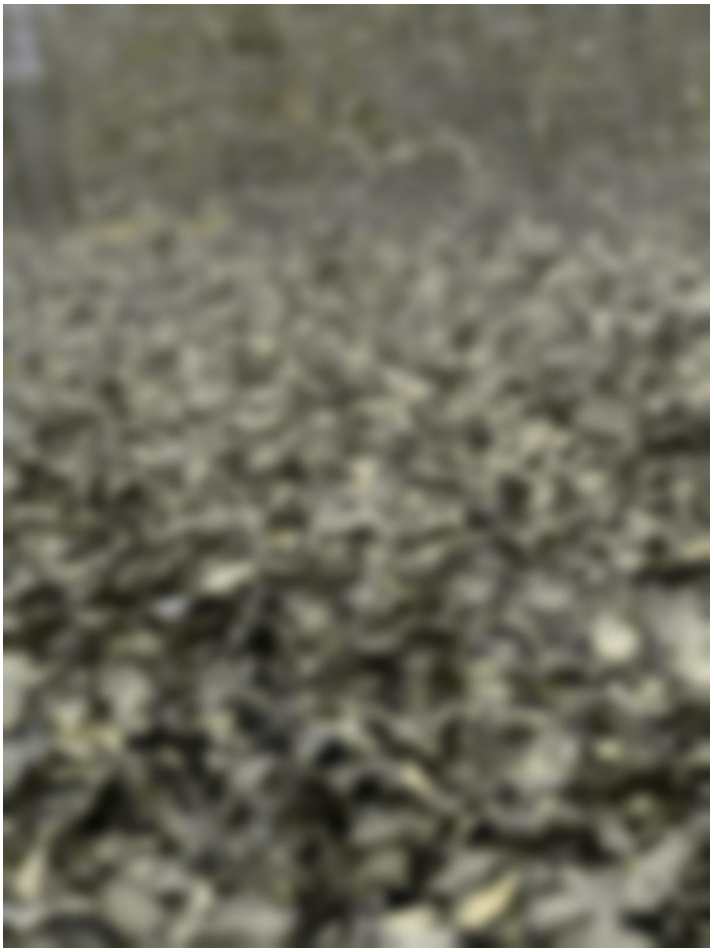

Figure 1.3, Shannon Calcott, *Dog-camera tests #3*, 2021.

And yet if all of the inhabitants on the planet live under the horizon of extinction, why are images of the anthropocene missing? To Stephanie Amon, curator of the exhibition, *Now You Don't* (2018), extinction has experienced a "compounded" and abstracted absence compared to other existential disappearances that have been previously addressed in photography (Amon, 2018, para. 6). Yet according to Zylinska, photography as a medium is dichotomous in its ability to show us extinction:

> As the increasing proliferation of images of disaster and suffering in various media testifies, there is no evidence for perception being a trigger for moral action. Indeed, visual over-saturation may actually lead to non-action. We could therefore conclude that evolution has made it impossible for us to truly see evolution and hence, also extinction. Yet to state this is not to argue for photography's inherent weakness. Indeed, [...] photography is a quintessential practice of life, not just in the sense that, today, it records our lives nonstop but also in the deeper philosophical sense of encompassing life as duration through making incisions in it. (2018, p. 66).

In the article *Conditions of Visuality Under the Anthropocene*, Irmgard Emmelhainz proposes that the anthropocene has meant a radical change of the "conditions of visuality" due to the world's consequent transformation into images (2015, p. 1). Emmelhainz argues that due to images participating in the forming of worlds, they have developed "a new kind of knowledge" and demand the expansion of what she refers to as the "optical mind" (2015, p. 2). This ties in with Haraway's line of thinking on "prosthetic enhancements of vision" in that if images deal with concepts instead of really showing what is visibly *seen*, they fall into the trap of our assumptions that "anything can and is seen" (Emmelhainz, 2015, p. 4). This results in an explosion of visibilities that Emmelhainz argues is frustratingly opaque and can render extinction invisible by its incessant visualisations such as in the act of photographing wildlife (2015). Thus, an image becomes a substitute for our lived experience as well as a "certifier of reality" thereby determining what we demand from our reality. (Sontag, 1977, as cited in Emmelhainz, 2015, p. 5).

> In an era of ubiquitous synthetic and digital images dissociated from human vision and directly tied to power and capital, when images and aesthetic experience have been turned into cognition and thus into empty sensations or tautological truths about reality, the image of the anthropocene is yet to come. (Emmelhainz, 2015, p. 8).

Nonrepresentational photography has the potential to present the familiar in unfamiliar ways; it can conjure visions of the future through speculative mechanisms and elicit post-humanist narratives. Artists such Edward Burtynsky and Tom Hegen, whose photographs typically concern images of the anthropocene also challenge the art-historical tradition of the landscape genre (Smits, 2015). Their works problematise agency and materiality by presenting images of landscapes that are "not natural, but completely manufactured by humans" - blurring the line between nature and culture. (Smits, 2015, p. 6). The crude and innovative ways artists manipulate the camera apparatus to embody certain nonhuman perspectives causes me to question whether we are contributing to the problem of the anthropocene unintentionally, as our position on the technological chain certifies our agency and therefore our domination. Does Burtynsky consider his position when he dangles a Hasselblad out of a moving helicopter? As an artist, are there less dominating ways to make incisions in anthropocenic thinking? Landscape photography that portrays the relationship

between human and nature has a tendency (particularly aerial photography) to be reduced to formalist aesthetics (Smits, 2015). This dilutes urgent ethical responsibilities and the cynic in me believes that only when landscape photography comes down off the wall; when it becomes less fetishised in its milieu of sublime crevasses, undulations and valleys can it convert empty sensations into ecological statements. Is the image of the anthropocene still yet to come, as Emmelhainz assures us, or can we make incisions while still acknowledging our position of image-maker and builder of worlds?

Nonhuman vision

> Embracing nonhuman vision as both a concept and a mode of being in the world will allow humans to see beyond the humanist limitations of their current philosophies and worldviews, to unsee themselves in their godlike positioning of both everywhere and nowhere, and to become reanchored and reattached again. Nonhuman vision is therefore not just about reflectivity; it is rather about introducing concern about our point of view, and an account of it, into our conceptual and visual framework, while removing from it the privileging and stability of the humanist standpoint. It is about inviting the view of another to one's spectrum of visuality, to the point of radically disrupting this spectrum. (Zylinska, 2017, p. 15).

Nonhuman vision as defined by Joanna Zylinska presents a fresh perspective on the theories and practices of photography that go beyond anthropocentric notions. Regardless of whether photographs are made or produced by humans, nonhuman photography can embody mechanical and nonhuman elements as well as leave the human completely absent from the frame (Zylinska, 2017). This means that the photographic medium is utilising cultural and technological algorithms that Zylinska notes, seek to offer a "more embodied, immersive and entangled form of image and world formation" (2017, p. 8). Arising from Zylinska's ideas on nonrepresentational photography, I aim to present an expanded case study that will attempt to provide a model of perception thereby imagining more empathetic and ethically "enabling ways of seeing the world" (2017, p. 18).

Nonhuman photography

Nonhuman photography is defined as an imaging practice that goes beyond human-centric decisions. The medium of photography, as well as its accompanying philosophy, has continued to evolve in the age of technoscience and globalisation. What was once considered an intentional act; a *decisive moment* to fix an image to light-sensitive material, photography is now subject to the vision and logic of the apparatus. Where image-making devices now have the capacity for automation, motion-censoring, wireless communication as well as algorithmic machine-learning, photography no longer depends on a person being behind the viewfinder. In the making of nonhuman

photography, we have inadvertently abandoned the position of the subject, agent or addressee and have therefore untethered ourselves from the apparatus.

Figure 1.4, Shannon Calcott, still from dog-vision camera, 2021.

This loss of position offers unintentional possibilities for us because it no longer hinges on the belief that we are at the centre of all life, separated from other species and operating alone; unattached and unempathetic. We no longer need to believe that everything observable in the world is mere reflection and representation; that knowledge can only be siphoned by the values we endure in the formation of our rational world. The loss of position enables us to reexamine the universal values that reduce photography down to binary categories i.e. 'index', 'sign', 'signifier' that imply a rational and contained orientation that dictates how we should live and see the world (Rubinstein, 2018, p. 4). Losing the human-centric viewpoint negates control over all others which is ultimately what we fear as a species; as colonisers and governing bodies. How do we untether our intentions, privileges and biases that are responsible for the erasure of habitats, species and cultures? How do we act upon the rewriting of histories all for the "consumption by the human eye?" (Rubinstein, 2018, p. 3). The power of the image lies in its ability to equally control and mobilise the masses. It can just as much incite fear as it can inspire by incepting and distributing ideas. Detaching ourselves from the anthropocentric viewpoint can ultimately be good for us as well as nonhumans for we are entangled in a messy, relational state of consciousness tied to the senses and to the "material engagements with the world" (Rubinstein, 2018, p. 6)

Photography has been increasingly mobilised to "document the precariousness of the human habitat" yet it also functions as a way to help us "imagine a better tomorrow" (Zylinska, 2017, p. 2). If photography can help us develop new ways of seeing and imagining as Zylinska claims, we may be able to see beyond the humanist limitations of current philosophies and worldviews (2018). Nonhuman vision invites the view of others to "one's spectrum of visuality" while also introducing concern for our current point-of-view thereby having the potential to create incisions in our godlike positioning (Zylinska, 2017, p. 15). To be able to see like other nonhumans such as dogs, birds and insects invites a *partial standpoint* that builds upon "specific ways of seeing" - not only relating to the lives of nonhumans but of situated knowledges that work counter to a sense of

passivity (2017, p. 17). To Zylinska, there is "no unmediated photograph or passive camera obscura... there [are] only highly specific visual possibilities" that function as a partial way of constructing worlds (2017, p. 17).

Images that stimulate situated knowledges have the potential to fare better than what Susan Sontag referred to as 'images of suffering' (2003). The repetitive nature of 'images of suffering' can cause them to be reduced to icons - becoming proxies for destructive events that can lead to a sense of outrage and of hopelessness. Images as icons inadequately sum-up painful events; particularly icons of the anthropocene whereby failing to ignite action and ecopolitical resolve. It is as if the hard work - the deeper, looking-and-questioning work needed to inspire thoughtful, empathetic solutions is rendered too confounding and not urgent enough. This is when responsibility stops short of the photograph's edge. By contrast, images that serve to speculate and encourage us to imagine other worlds, provide touchpoints in which to engage the unfamiliar. A sense of the unfamiliar is not to be feared as it can invoke pleasure and empathy for the other - leading to lively encounters that can challenge our understanding of human and nonhuman relations.

The lively encounters of Lolabelle

In her documentary, *Heart of a Dog* (2015) performance artist and musician Laurie Anderson weaves an intimate and experimental portrait of life, death and grief in which she expands "nonhuman ways of being" and relating to the world (Walton, 2019, p. 38). Following the death of her beloved dog, Lolabelle, a rat terrier, Anderson attempts to translate the gift of companionship through a series of free-forming meditations filtered by the speculative thoughts, desires and point-of-view of her canine companion (Walton, 2019, p. 39). Anderson imagines what it is like to encounter the world from the nonhuman perspective while ruminating on the bond she shared with Lolabelle - through a series of hand-drawn animations, archived video footage and home movies. One day while out walking with Lolabelle in the mountains of Northern California, Anderson is surprised by a few hawks swooping down towards her dog. Anderson's voiceover notes that the hawks may well have perceived Lolabelle to be the size of a small rabbit from far above but upon closer inspection, they changed their plan and re-calculated their target. Rat terriers are known for surveillance and protecting borders and to Lolabelle, this encounter was significant:

> ...and then I saw Lolabelle's face; this brand new expression, first was the realisation that she was prey and that these birds had come to kill her. And second, was a whole new thought, the realisation that they could come... from the air. *I mean, I never thought of that. A whole 180 more degrees that I'm now responsible for. It's not just the stuff down here - the dirt, the paths, the roots, the trees, but all this too.* And the rest of the time we were in the mountains, she just kept looking over her shoulder and trotting along with her head in the air, scanning the thin sky. (Anderson, 2015).

As a human, Anderson connects Lolabelle's encounter with the hawks and her realisation that "they come from above" with that of 9/11 and the psychological (and visual) aftermath, resulting in global technological enhancements such heightened airport security and citizen and data surveillance (2015). By looking with Lolabelle, Anderson meaningfully locates humanity - in how we cope in moments of crisis and how we move throughout the world.

As a dog, Lolabelle's world has always been terra firma - a landscape of stratified soil, water, enzymes and dust where daily social greetings, hazards, noises, and smells make up her day. Why would she ever need to look up? *Umwelt* is defined as a living being's subjective and species-specific reality that is mediated via its sensory organs and arranged by values that the organism assigns to its surrounding environment (Uexküll, 1982). A human's *umwelt* is wholly defined by vision but also constrained by it. As a species living together, we share the perceived richness of physical objects; of signs and shapes depending on our line of vision (Kjosavik et al., 2018). We accept what is seen and what is given. Yet, *umwelten* of individuals, such as Lolabelle's terra firma, can differ from that of its own kind. This is significant because it provides fertile ground for the translations and expressions of lived experience. To speak to others, according to Meijers, is to produce meaning (2017). Ultimately, Anderson recognises the connection between lives and worlds and how vision relates to one's position in any given environment. It is as if perception is located within a hierarchical framework that can shift depending on the conditions. By speculating Lolabelle's thoughts, emotions and realisations, Anderson works against anthropocentrism and puts herself into the heart and mind of a dog.

Seeing the world as a dog and intersecting it with the way a human sees it, promotes a sense of interspecies entanglement (Haraway, 2007). Thus, Anderson is entangled with Lolabelle and their companionship provides a counter to human exceptionalism. When Lolabelle grows old and loses her vision, Anderson teaches her how to play the keyboard as a way to introduce her to other means of interacting in the world that rely on touch and sound. It is as if playing keyboard compensates for her lost sense. Much to the delight of family and friends, Lolabelle excels at the keyboard; she chooses to play every day, barks to announce each chord change and above all, seems to enjoy it. Anderson does not stay passive to the changing material conditions of Lolabelle and in doing so, develops a new way for both of them to relate to one another. Anderson's piano project extends an empathy to Lolabelle that not only engages the dog but also displaces any sense of her own anthropocentric bias. In 2010, at the Vivid Sydney Festival in Australia, Anderson debuted an original composition called *Music for Dogs* (Brady-Brown, 2015). The musical piece was unveiled at the Sydney Opera House and consisted of twenty minutes of "high-frequency noise art" for an "audience of a thousand dogs" (Brady-Brown, 2015, para. 3).

Eventually, as Lolabelle's health declines, Anderson is confronted with the prospect of her death and seeks the guidance of her Buddist teacher as to whether she should euthanise her beloved companion. Anderson is told that death is a process and one that all humans and nonhumans seek to make peace with and that by choosing empathy (she ultimately cradles Lolabelle for two days until she dies) Anderson gives Lolabelle agency. By extending this kindness to her companion, Anderson goes against any kind of rudimentary idea we have concerning nonhumans; their motivations and their perceiving sense-of-self and place in the world.

CHAPTER 3

Assimilating Ivy into coastal, city life proved to be quite difficult. No matter what street we found ourselves on, we faced a calamity of variables that would frighten Ivy senseless. Buses, street-sweepers, garbage trucks, roadside construction were to Ivy's senses, loud and terrifying. My world - my *real*, immediate and constructed environment was to her, a danger. It was as if I could see through her eyes, as if everything was unknown and to be treated with extreme caution. I observed that every object, whether it be designed for entertainment or recreation, was entered into the vortex of unpredictability - roller skates, kites, paragliders, jet skis, bicycles, trolleys, skateboards, scooters and helium balloons...

To me, indoor environments such as my apartment; with its comforting walls, arrangement of furniture and breezy airflow created an idyllic haven of peace. To Ivy, it was unfamiliar and fear-inducing. A door might slam shut; an object accidentally dropped, a window opened, a curtain drawn. Once, in her line of sight, a grocery bag split, causing its contents to fall on the floor. Ivy was upset about it for hours. After all the relating to each other - the bonding and the gaining of trust - I realised that the only environment Ivy was most liberated from fear and free to be her most *self*, her most *doggiest* of self, was in the bush... Quite naturally.

Sentient traces

As the camera glazes over a flurry of tufted grass and dirt patches a dog whizzes past at lightning speed. Ivy has spent a good 15 minutes with her nose to the ground, inspecting all of the delectable smells on offer at a local dog park called Blankenstein - a vast, open 50-hectare field that was once the ground for the largest cattle slaughterhouse in Berlin. The industrial iron frames that once belonged to the halls housing thousands of cattle are the only remnants of Berlin's central factory farming practices. Today, crossfit groups train underneath their great iron arches; teenagers mill about smoking cigarettes and dogs frolic in the grasses. Ivy smells the ground and seems to gain just as much information as pleasure in the act. As soon as I avert my gaze, she expertly rubs her neck in an irresistible musky, sticky residue that I can only assume is dog urine. I sit and speculate just what

smells are permeating from this field. Firstly, the urine of dogs and humans alike come to mind. Then comes the potential scents of beer, coffee, cigarette butts, chicken bones, bread, garbage, döner, spilled picnic snacks and cannabis. What about further down in the soil? Can Ivy smell the oxidation of vegetable matter, the fertiliser, the worms? What about the ants' nests, the turf roots, the compacted leaf litter? If she can smell what time of day it is, can she smell the past? Of humans and animals now gone? Can she smell the fear, misery and death of the cattle that were once involuntarily here? Their flesh, blood and excrement? Are the human practices of enslaving and butchering others marked forever in the soil, stratified by time? If dogs were able to smell the past and hold us accountable for our actions, would we want to know the truth? If so, what would we do with that information? Would we continue to defend and protect our interests for the sake of our species?

Considering truths about the way we live and its impact on others is existential in the sense that it requires us to not only question our place in the world but to decide what actually matters. The 1949 short story titled *The Sound Machine* by Roald Dahl is about a man who is obsessed with sound. The man builds a sound machine that converts high frequencies undetectable to the human ear into audible sound. He discovers that the faint high-pitched screams he hears in his headphones come from the roses being cut by his neighbour next door. To test his theory that plants feel pain, he plants an axe blade deep into the wood of a tree trunk and hears a long draw-out sob (Dahl, 1949). Thinking he is going mad, the man asks a friend to listen as he wedges the axe once again in the tree. His friend denies what he had heard, refusing to confirm the man's theory.

Humans, quite like the friend in Dahl's short story, are armed with knowledges governed by science, technology and history and yet we don't really want to know the truth, or the details of the human practices in which our existence and lifestyles are built. Even worse, we allow politics to diffuse any real global consensus, particularly with regards to climate change and animal rights policies. The rootedness of our own self-importance is an omnipotent structure arching over almost all humans quite like the iron frames of the slaughterhouse.

Introduction to *Field Studies #1*

The accompanying video work to my thesis produces a knowledge "from doing and from the senses" by way of non-anthropocentric philosophies (Barrett & Bolt, 2007, p. 1). In undertaking the video project I strive to understand our relations with nonhumans as well as demonstrate a possible ethics through the cultivation of attention and empathy. I explore what it is like to see as a dog and whether a dog's world is incongruent with our own. This is significant because as a companion species, dogs will continue to cohabit with us, share public spaces with us, be affected by human laws and will never be able to detangle their social relations with us, even if they wanted

to. They will never be able to remove their labels of herder, guard dog, therapy dog, sniffer dog, street dog, stud dog and pet. During the development of the video work I have fostered a deeper sympathy towards my companion, Ivy. She is after all, a sentient being with her own sense of self - she embodies a wholeness of personality as well as an awareness of her right to agency in the way she wants to live. She is not just a pet as she has rich social relations outside of the domestic space and desires new environments, sights and experiences that expand the boundaries of her daily life. The nonhuman subject is endlessly fascinating and during my observations what becomes apparent is that *being* is not just about *existing*. It's about having the freedom of agency - to decide what-and-who will hold our attention, how we move throughout the world and how we relate to others in order to live well. In this chapter, I discuss my video work *Field Studies #1* in a manner that sits apart from previous chapters. What I have deduced is the necessary outcome of the preceding scholarly analysis.

With a manipulated camera apparatus, I have filmed four distinct spaces that dogs generally inhabit - the domestic, urban, nature and playground spaces. My camera (consisting of a raspberry pi computer and three webcams, an internet data hotspot and a powerbank, see fig. 5) was programmed with characteristics that simulate what we know about canine vision - such as colour perception, visual acuity and range of vision. By speculating what it is like to see as a dog and in doing so, exploring the world from the nonhuman perspective, *Field Studies #1* facilitates a visual language between the human and nonhuman. Not only does the video present an empirical impression of the doggy perspective, it shows us how dogs might perceive our world. The video aims to generate meaningful dialogue on how we can decentralise the human viewpoint (particularly in the face of impending extinction) than to have a realist claim about perception. The greatest ethical consideration arising from this project is the insistence of common worlds and that every human action (whether intentional or incidental) impacts nonhumans materially and temporally.

Field Studies #1 provides a space of personally-situated research, of producing knowledge that stems from subjective concerns. The irony is not lost on me that this research required my own agency to engage in the activity of filming and disrupting. Pierre Bourdieu suggested that without human agency, material relations that form our "objective reality" cannot be grasped (Bourdieu, 1977, as cited in Barrett & Bolt, 2007, p. 4). That it is only with "sense activity" motivated by "emotional and personal concerns that we can understand, interpret and develop a plurality of views" (2017, p. 4).

In the development of my research, I was both expectant and unaware of the factors and knowledges that would emerge. Due to my previous test photo stills, I knew how the video work I was to later produce would appear aesthetically. The stills had been processed with a code written

to simulate canine visual acuity and colour perception. Images of trees, leaf litter and lakes resulted in blurred shapes with muted tones - anything in nature that appeared to have red pigments became tones of gold or muddied grey (fig. 1 - 3).

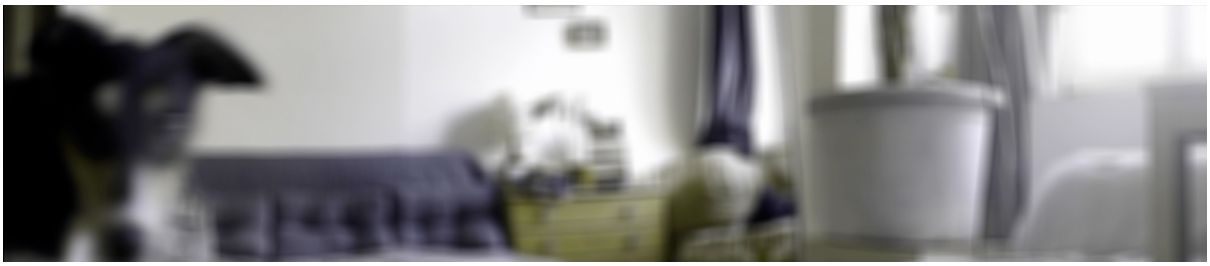

Figure 1.5, Shannon Calcott, still from dog-vision camera, 2021.

With regards to filming with Ivy, I knew I was up for a challenge because as stated previously, she is highly aware of a camera's presence and does not appreciate being filmed or photographed. Working with Ivy forced me to examine the notion of consent and more importantly what I was asking of her in the pursuit of my wishes for the project. In allowing her to participate in the way that she was comfortable with, I was reminded of Haraway's concept of body politics that in turn, better informed my understanding of nonhuman agency.

What resulted was a video work that presented a speculative day in the life of a dog - of a domesticated dog's world but more specifically, of a dog living in a human-constructed world. The speculative aspects of this project make it experimental by nature. However, to imagine unfamiliar worlds is also by its very nature an extension towards empathy, as it, for a moment, allows us to forget our self-directed motivations (Meijer, 2017). In order to imagine the *dogginess* of dogs, I had to facilitate to some degree, an awareness of how to *be* a dog. In the following sections, I explore how work such as *Field Studies #1* can help us to reconceptualise the way we see ourselves in our domination of other earthly inhabitants. We encroach, dictate and designate the use of space regardless of other species - to best serve ours. Dogs are "man's best friend" so it is necessary that we examine how we impact their lives in order to develop ethical ways of coexisting with all nonhumans. By looking-with dogs, *Field Studies #1* and the accompanying sections engage with the larger questions raised in the thesis so far.

The dog-vision camera

Ivy did not want to *play ball*. I had spent several days tinkering with different kinds of makeshift mounts that I could fix my camera to. I needed a mount that provided both a steadiness and an easy mobility for the various environments I was to shoot in. Throughout my project I was set on the

idea of developing a harness / camera contraption that Ivy could wear. I thought at length about the weight and the obtrusiveness of the camera, opting for a light and small device that might go unnoticed by a dog. As soon as I started marking up Ivy's fleece jumper with a pen and positioning the camera on her shoulders, she completely shut down. It was clear to me that she was communicating her wishes not to participate as my camera-operator. If I was to practice ethics, I was going to have to start listening to her. I discovered that there was no practical application that involved Ivy wearing the camera. To strap the webcams to a headband, quite like Anderson's goPro experiment with Lolabelle, would have been nearly impossible as there would be no place to secure the raspberry pi computer and powerbank. Even if I could persuade Ivy to wear a harness, there was no guarantee that the camera's producing material would have been convincing enough. If the camera was positioned on Ivy's chest, her head would have been in view if she chose to sniff the ground. If the camera was positioned above her head, her ears would have been in view when looking upwards. Realising this, I was disappointed - I yearned to know what life was really like to a dog, even if speculatively. I wanted to capture the qualities that make a dog's act of looking unique from our own - their gestures, pauses, their attention towards certain objects, people and scenes. I looked at Ivy who had already returned to her bed. Resting her head on the side cushion, she was gazing over the edge watching a fly run across the floor. I thought, to capture what a dog sees, I'm going to have to start thinking like a dog...

Learning to look *with* Ivy was challenging. I had discovered a solution to my camera mount problem by attaching the webcams to a sunglasses case, allowing the cameras to be handheld. I used a small handbag to carry the raspberry pi computer and powerbank that were tethered to the webcams. With this setup, I was able to move freely around the dedicated spaces unobtrusively. When encountering spaces, the more challenging aspect was to imagine myself as a dog. Dogs do not pay attention to the same objects we do. A dog's order of importance on the material values constructing their world essentially differs from ours. This was apparent to me when I was filming a walk around my neighbourhood. I directed the camera to linger on the street posters, the garbage, street lights and cars when actually, dogs do not indicate any emotional or cultural signification for these objects. After several days of filming this way, I'd unintentionally fallen deeper into the anthropocentric trap.

It took me a while to realise that what I thought looked aesthetically pleasing was in no way an attempt to accurately represent a dog's world view. I was filming dogs playing in the distance and told Ivy to move out of the way, out of the camera's frame while her own focus was directed towards the ground. According to Meijer, we can only get to know nonhumans when we go "beyond our own motivations", to sit and observe as long as it takes (2017, p. 84). Paying attention facilitates a real meeting of the other and we must follow their lead if we are to meaningfully learn about their worlds (Meijer, 2017).

To attempt to displace my anthropocentric viewpoint, I started to film at my local park and mimicked Ivy's gestures - when she turned her head, where her gaze fell, what caught her attention. An ambiguous shape in the distance became a smudge, became a dog, became a familiar dog, became a friend that she knew. By watching her, I could see this dawning in her mind. Her recognition, realisation and reaction. Something grasped. Knowledge gained. From then on, I followed her around, observing what she thought was interesting and warranting attention.

I got on all fours, positioned my eyeline at relative dog-height, focusing on the objects Ivy paid attention to, role-played with my partner in pretending to be Ivy and attempted to intervene during dog play-time. I discovered that there was a healthy level of imperfection in my research as well as in my camera apparatus. I also discovered that photography is a flawed medium in which to engage in common worlds.

The material is always present

Field Studies #1 draws attention to the visual discrepancies between dogs and humans. By opting to use three webcams instead of just one, the work bypasses the single camera lens that is modeled on the human eye. To photographers, the 50mm lens is considered the most objective of focal lengths as it renders images that elicit the "true perspective" of humans (Kestenholz, 2012, para. 18). The 50mm lens is known as the baseline view of photography that even camera manufacturer Leica refers to it as the "natural image angle" (Kestenholz, 2012, para. 16). Since its advent, the medium of photography has abided by the assumptions of what we deem *natural*, *true* and *real.* The camera apparatus is characterised by human-centric decisions that are defined by consumption and extensions of power. It is a tool that is utilised for the conquering and suppressing of those who are removed from the means of production - the webcams necessitate a connection to a local network using the raspberry pi's IP address in order to operate. Once the raspberry pi establishes a connection, the webcams can process and record any scene without the need for me to turn them on. This was an unexpected discovery and it speaks to the uneasiness I feel about the digital devices I've steadily become dependent on to live my life. When a few lines of code can fundamentally override an off-switch, materiality means nothing. It also raises ethical and legal issues regarding the privacy of citizens as well as the capabilities and intentions of governments and private companies. As democracies are eroding world-over, camera apparatuses are increasingly utilised in such a way to diminish the livelihoods, rights and freedoms of humans in the name of homeland security. When camera technologies are dramatically improving and becoming cheaper to produce, we have to question those in power who wield it. Despite this, photography is a life-shaping medium and if we acknowledge both its power and limitations without infringing the rights of others, we can expand our visualities and enable new ways of seeing the world (Zylinska, 2017).

Figure 1.6, Shannon Calcott, dog-vision camera development, 2021

With Zylinska's words in mind, I've tentatively balanced the role of camera operator and I realise I'm inadvertently just as much the subject of my video project as Ivy is. The double bind is that in order to think differently, I had to position myself at the centre of the project. How can I make an image that is nonrepresentational when the standard for vision is based on the human experience? As I stared down at the viewfinder (my iPhone) my visual senses were stripped away - clear objects in the distance became blurred and murky around the edges. I wonder what it would be like to live this way. As someone with 20/20 vision, it's one thing to view it on a small black screen and to snap back to reality as soon as I look away. It's another thing to live it. The human world was not built for those who are visually challenged.

When viewing *Field Studies #1*, you are constantly aware of the materiality. Objects shift and subvert, the lighting dims and brightens, figures stagger over the three squares that have variably stitched the whole scene together. I am referring to the webcams in particular. Three webcams were required to necessitate a 240 degree range of vision available to dogs as opposed to a human's 180 degrees. Objects detected on a human's visual periphery field appear unfocused; our corneas instead favour a centralised object. Dogs however, have a more astute peripheral field that for

evolutionary purposes is useful for sensing motion and large-scale objects (Rastogi, 2016). Dogs can, in a sense, see the "bigger picture" and rely less on the details gleaned from solidary objects. When humans encounter an object, we position our bodies front and centre to orient ourselves in relation to it. With dogs, spatial orientation is much more nuanced. Unlike dogs, our ability to orient ourselves from a central point has been significant in the navigation and subsequent proliferation of our species (Steyerl, 2011). Consequently, our centralised position has decomposed any sense of objectivity in our encountering of the world and has cemented what we perceive is truth and reality. By stitching together an image that imitates a dog's range of vision, the video work attempts to reorder the importance of objects; their attached meanings and functions, and therefore the subjectivities in which scenes are observed.

Figure 1.7, Shannon Calcott, dog-vision camera apparatus, 2021

An obvious imperfection of the video work is the resulting 5 frames per second due to the raspberry pi's computer-processing power. The image is staggered and scrappy - tonally, it feels like a stop motion animation. Due to the limitation of the apparatus, the absent frames become stand-ins for just how differently dogs detect movement. When a ball is thrown, do dogs observe it

in slow motion? The ability to perceive rapid changes in one's visual field depends on the species thus our comprehension of "real time" is subjective (Healy et al., 2013). For now, with dogs, we can only speculate.

To pretend to be a dog is to speculate how a dog perceives the world. During the development of *Field Studies #1*, "being" a dog presented a more dynamic filming technique that in turn, shifted my notions of aesthetics in film - the blurring of images, the handheld movements, the ambiguous specks in the distance, the altered spatial perspectives, the four walls of rooms, anatomically untouchable ceilings, the height and looming figures of humans, the solid, autonomous moving vehicles, the tiny-winged shapes soaring through the sky. Not to mention the aesthetics of the apparatus itself - the papery, stitching of scenes, the performance lag, the subversion of objects viewed up-close. The image as a whole is evocative in its imperfection. And to a dog, the lack of visual acuity does not lead to a lesser life and yet their position in relation to humans, does.

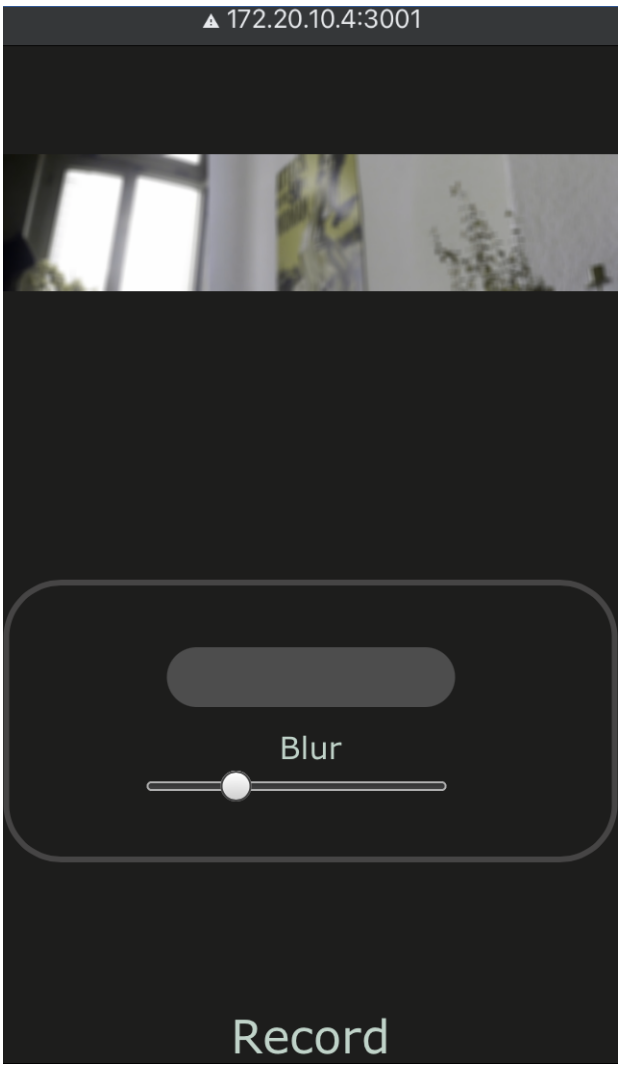

Figure 1.8, Shannon Calcott, dog-vision camera viewfinder, 2021

Field Studies #1: a dog's world

Domestic space

Camera height: Greyhound
Colour: White
Visuals: Furniture, kitchen appliances, humans, stairs, food, walls, floorboards

Much of Ivy's day involves sleeping. When she is not sleeping, she's staring at the floorboards, or beyond the round edges of her bed; the windows of the apartment are far too high to elicit any meaningful curiosity or entertainment. The noises, weather elements and stimuli of outside events penetrate the inside space of Ivy's home, disturbing her. It is as if they are not from the same world. Ivy coexists in a fairly relaxed family dynamic with virtually no rules or discipline. If she doesn't want to do something, she doesn't have to. Despite this, she is deprived of stimulation; her day is made up of large segments of monotony in what I can only describe as neither new sights nor smells in the inevitable familiarity of the home - of domestic life. When 5pm rolls around, signs of life spring forth at the mention of 'walkies' - opening up an endless list of possibilities; of encounters, social bonding with fellow dogs, of new and intriguing sensory experiences. After her dinner, Ivy stares at her upright fleshly food-giver / back-scratcher that inevitably spends most of its time staring at a laptop screen. What odd creatures we are.

In the expansion of our world, we've drastically reduced the lives of domesticated species. In our love and affection for them, we've kept dogs safe, fed and healthy. And yet we've stowed them away - always inside and confined between walls or behind fences. They are our emotional support, our confidants, fur-children and companions until we are simply absent for most hours of the day. The possibilities available to Ivy for new and intrigue vanish as soon as the door lock clicks shut. Until she develops a method to unlock doors, this will continue to happen. And yet I convince myself that she is happy with me and that I'm providing her with a good life. Ivy does not experience a variety of social encounters and material sensations in her day, as I do. We have reduced, rezoned and redefined the spaces dogs are to inhabit and do not give them any say in the matter. Due to our efforts in limiting the spaces in which dogs are free to move around or make their own decisions for their safety, we have also limited their possibilities "of finding new ways to interact" (Meijer, 2017). Our treatment of companion species can be likened to our dominance over other nonhuman species. We believe our treatment of others is kind and caring and we genuinely appreciate the few species not deemed as *pests* that inhabit the same spaces we do. And yet, we reduce their agency and ability to roam freely in their own habitats by fencing them off by way of private property or in well-intentioned sanctuaries. We believe it is for their protection and most of the time, it is. A dog roaming freely in a city is presented with a large possibility of danger and death. We reduce their

lives for their protection but we also ignore the core problem of human supremacy and encroachment in the first place.

Our relationship with dogs is domineering despite our love for them. Their subservience certifies them as recipients of our conditional love, frustrations and whims. During the filming of Ivy's domestic space, I recreated fragments of the routines Ivy and I would perform together such as coming home from a walk, eating dinner, lying on the couch and receiving affection. I played the role of Ivy and my partner played the role of me. Wearing a collar and tethered to a lead, I followed my partner up the stairs of my apartment building. In this performance, what became apparent to me was that as soon as I was leashed, the dynamic of power shifted - I was reduced to the bottom step of the stairwell. Where a lead is both an active enabler of safe activity on the streets, it is also a tool for control. When a human wears a lead, the power disparity between who is the actor and who is the object is unmistakable. With a dog, the action is normalised and accepted as logic.

Urban space

Camera height: Irish Wolfhound
Colour: Grey
Visuals: Cars, humans, obstacles, street posts, paths, trucks, bicycles, trams

If Ivy had the agency to take herself for a walk around the neighbourhood she would be in the depths of an urban space that has not been constructed with her species in mind. Dogs who inhabit urban spaces are confined to certain perimeters and are disconnected from natural surroundings just as much as we are. Throughout the thousands of years of domestication, dogs have adapted their senses and skills to better serve them in a human-centric world. They have adapted to the environments humans have invariably built for themselves. We haven't stopped to consider how we could adapt to theirs. It is important to start including dogs in the conversations regarding spatial reform of our cities and regional areas. To move freely and without danger is a privilege and shouldn't be just for those who are able-bodied and human.

In her servitude and tetheredness to me, Ivy hasn't learned the skills to successfully navigate urban spaces. As soon as she leaves her confines and the boundaries dictated by me, she is essentially alone, cut-off from social relations as if an isolated island in a cosmopolitan hell. On her walk, Ivy faces an insurmountable set of obstacles and hazards that would determine how freely she is able to move around - cars, trucks, scooters, bicycles, trams and forklifts become death-makers for her. Unlike myself, Ivy has involuntarily been admitted to the game without knowing the rules. When she developed the ability to coexist with humans, she certainly didn't ask for this. Although remarkably adept at finding discarded roast chicken carcasses in parks, she doesn't know how to safely navigate traffic. However, that is not to say that all dogs cannot 'learn the rules' to survive in urban spaces. In

the aftermath of the Soviet Union, stray dogs in Moscow learned how to navigate the city's sprawling metro system (McGrane, 2013). The dogs figured out how to ride escalators and the underground trains; knowing which stations to depart in search of food, new smells and encounters with humans (McGrane, 2013). According to Sally McGrane, when the standards of living rose in Russia, Moscow's population of dogs grew due to better food foraging options as well as less city regulations (2013). The dogs developed "complex survival strategies" by exploring the underground networks and commuters became quite fond of them - often providing them with food and affection (2013, para. 7). The dogs memorised each station via its announcers' voice, took naps on subway seats and were found to ride the train purely for "recreational reasons" (2013, para. 8). McGrane asserts that dogs are just as inclined to "see new places" as humans are (2013, para. 8).

> There are three models of metro dogs, [...] Dogs who live in the subway but do not travel, dogs who use the subway to travel short distances instead of walking, and entrepreneurial dogs who spend the day riding back and forth, busking. This last type of dog takes long trips, working the crowd for treats and emotional contact. (Neuronov, 2013, as cited in McGrane, 2013, para. 8).

Ivy has not yet learned to ride the escalator or navigate the metro system by herself and continues to put up with my daily demands, whims and occasional tugs on the lead. The control I wield over her contributes to the decline of important abilities in how she perceives her world such as the reduction of her nasal sensors (E.K. Jenkins et. al, 2018). Obstructing the delectable smells that peak Ivy's interest (for instance, döner kebab stands) is just one example of how I unwittingly intrude upon important aspects of her life.

While filming with Ivy in the urban space, it's evident to me that the human world is overstimulated. The material abundance of human life infiltrates Ivy's focus on *her* world through the noises, people, moving vehicles, construction, scaffolds and delivery cyclists. Our visually-rich world characterises the way we communicate and derive meaning - with cues, signs and gestures. Despite our ability to decipher what red vs green traffic light means, Ivy was almost hit by a car during filming. The light was green and as we walked across a pedestrian crossing, the driver of the car could not see her over his dashboard. Even when all signs point to green, she is still invisible in our world.

If dogs had total freedom of agency, they would view our dominion over space as a travesty. If dogs were council members and city planners, they would tear down fences to create more spaces in which to wander. Dogs wouldn't ban cars outright because they enjoy riding in them and yet they would limit the amount of traffic on the roads and create safer passages for nonhumans. With fewer cars in cities, dogs would plant trees in most designated car spaces. Dogs would demolish office buildings and legislate humans to work less and from the home. Dogs would implement tenancy

laws to end pet descrimination. Dogs would promote more time for play and affection. Dogs would attend council meetings - not in dreary, windowless institutions but in parks. Dogs would ban fireworks and free-up sidewalks. Dogs would leave their excrement in its original location. Dogs would design a traffic light system with discernible blue and yellow lights, with the symbol of a dog (not a man) in its place. Dogs would ban leashes and muzzles and establish spaces for themselves on public transport. Dogs would claim more space in which to encounter more of their kin. Dogs would add extra drinking fountains, shorter stairs and implement a welfare system for strays. Dogs would encourage other nonhumans to reclaim their habitats and educate humans to peacefully coexist with them. Dogs would enact meaningful climate change policies and animal rights laws. Dogs would then install low windows in their homes in order to observe their new world - a just world, where their vision finally mattered.

Nature space

Camera height: Beagle
Colour: Green (undetected)
Visuals: Trees, birds, soil, lakes, branches, humans, rocks

Ivy is incredibly attuned to the detection of movement. It is as if she processes time differently. An object slows down and she can pinpoint it to precision, even if its details are not clear. Ivy's inability to see the texture and detail of an object does not rely on her ability to glean information from it. What matters is the line and shape of an object - detection and recognition. With dogs, it is all about the bigger picture.

We are filming at a lake in one of Berlin's largest forests called Grunewald. My partner has just thrown a stick into the water. She leaps into the water - bunny-hopping and then swimming to retrieve it when her paws no longer reach the bottom. This stretch of the lake is a dedicated dog beach with seemingly little signs of human intervention besides the sandy paths and short fences protecting vegetation. Away from traffic, loud noises and building construction, the dog beach offers as much freedom as a dog can have in Berlin - it is a beach within a forest. There are several 'coves' that provide long stretches of sand for a dog to enjoy and the water is pristine. It is a place where humans and dogs can meet and engage - all you hear is laughing, barking and splashing. We are as close to nature as we can possibly be despite being on the outskirts of a city. It contrasts with the pace of city life and in a different world, could have been the model for city planners in lieu of the asphalt, bollards and skyscrapers that currently dominate our urban spaces.

To continue our video recordings, we visit another lake called Weissensee, located in central Berlin. This lake differs remarkably to Grunewaldsee. The lake offers refuge - a small oasis amongst the bustling of city life. It is easy to commute to and is a popular bathing spot for Berlin's human

inhabitants. It immediately becomes clear to me while looking through my camera's viewfinder just how fabricated this nature space is. There are paved paths, bench seats, overfilled rubbish bins and kiosks slinging ice cream and beer. Perhaps it is Ivy's behavioural cues or perhaps I'm beginning to 'see' like a dog but I sense that the incisions made at the site are purely for human mobility and convenience. The 'coves' situated at the mouth of the lake are unlike that of the dog beach. They are small and confined and not fit to stretch one's legs. Due to the confined areas, humans are corralled close together - eliciting collective views, noises and water in which to bathe. Beyond the thin fringe of trees, the sound of traffic, music and nearby drilling penetrates through. To say it is relaxing, it is not. Ivy pads along the water's edge - she is not too keen on swimming here. Does she not feel safe? Are the noises distracting? Is the water not as clean? Is she happy?

Playground space

Camera height: Labrador
Colour: Yellow
Visuals: Dogs, nonverbal cues, soil, humans, sky, cobblestones, cars

A grey bushy tail flashes across the frame. Padded feet dash about in the dried grass and take chase - not in a straight line but as if in a dance, lock-step with something off-screen. A pair of yellow eyes glance at the camera and there's a sparkle of recognition in them. Wilka is a 5-year old wolf-mix from Poland and is one of Ivy's friends. They are playing together at a local park and they are certainly aware of my camera's presence. They keep their distance, refusing the camera its image. They also seem aware of the performance we demand from them whenever we thrust a dark rectangle object in their faces. In a sense, dogs are just like us. When we smile in front of a camera we negotiate an unspoken agreement with the photographer - the giving-and-taking of a moment. It is a learned behaviour and it is almost always expected of us. As humans, we also expect that a photograph can be taken at any time during moments of playful activity or recreation. We turn and smile as if to say, "look at how much fun we're having". Our attention is divided so momentarily that it goes unnoticed.

Ivy and Wilka nuzzle each others' necks as they sprint across the field. Hunched-over to their level, I chase them with the camera in-hand. I want to capture the playful exchange occurring between them - the nonverbal cues, side-eyes, play bows and body flops that make up their games. I notice that their play sequence breaks aparts as soon as I catch up to them. They run circles around me as if they are herding a lone sheep. It dawns on me that just like humans, a dog's sense-of-self changes when a camera is present - that it is an intrusive object. It has effectively broken whatever social exchange I had hoped to capture with it. But it's more than that. Ivy's lack of appreciation of having her photo taken extends to the play space. It is a space that is sacred - not just in geographical terms but social ones. It requires attention and participation. A space where, from nose to tail, all

senses are firing. I realise that my mere presence is largely the cause of the disruption. It is like abruptly walking in on someone in their bedroom - it changes the atmosphere as well as the conditions relating to what is possible and expected. My presence breaks whatever is being silently communicated between the two dogs. They continue to keep their distance from me. After all, I wasn't invited to their game.

A dog park is a seemingly nonverbal space for action and sociality. It is where dogs figure out their place in the social order - one that is mutable depending on the conditions and personalities that are present, once glances and greetings have been exchanged. Looking through the viewfinder, I discover that this is one of the only spaces that Ivy can claim some form of agency. In this arena, dogs don't need humans to solve their problems as they can naturally mediate their social encounters. Other than de-escalating harmful situations, there's no real need for us to intervene during play time or else we risk eroding dogs' social relations. The play space enables dogs to be with others of their species and this is something that we don't give much thought to. I try to imagine being constantly surrounded by another species most of my life and the thought takes on the tone of a sci-fi film.

As I look up from the viewfinder, I notice the nonverbal cues the dogs are signalling to each other. Their remarkably rich interactions are easy to miss unless observed closely. Ivy and Wilka's range of vision partly explains how they can communicate something by standing side-on rather than face-to-face as humans do. But it's still not clear to me how they can communicate so well with subtle facial expressions and slight body movements given their visual acuity. Does *play* rely on more than just vision senses? How do they catch the small details? Do the details even matter? When Ivy and Wilka are tired and happy from an exhilarating day at the park, we head home. My camera is still recording and the dogs run ahead as if they're not quite ready to relinquish their new-found agency. Something invisible passes between them and as they take a cursory glance behind them - back at me; they lope out of sight.

Conclusion

Ivy is on my bed with me. I've succumbed to the side-effects of the vaccination I received for Covid-19 and Ivy is offering some affectionate support. It's not lost on me that my species' inability to reconcile life with ecology is ostensibly why we've ended up in a global pandemic, why I'm now lying in bed during the day. Perhaps lying in bed right now is a refusal in-place. After all, a dog doesn't mind lying in bed all day. If anything, their daily life necessitates it. I look at Ivy. She is sleeping roach-like with her legs in the air. Her paws twitch and scurry as she falls further into a dream. I like to imagine that she's running in a lush field with others of her kind.

Ivy is not going to be alive for much longer. She has at most, 8 years left. Is she aware of this fact? Or does her perception of time amount to a lengthy life filled with encounters, memories, scents and relationships? At the end of her life, will she have regrets or dreams unfulfilled like we do? Will I regret not showing my affection enough; my fingertips preoccupied with my keyboard instead of in the act of patting and scratching her hard-to-reach places? One thing is for certain, Ivy will at least not have the burden of knowing that her species is responsible for the extinction of all others.

Confronting anthropocentrism inevitably raises a healthy level of existentialism, at least in the individual. My research and video work with Ivy has transformed the way I think for the better, although soberly at times. I now include her more thoroughly in the daily decisions that inform our lives together. I encounter her, not affording her the qualities and deserved respect of other humans, but as a nonhuman. A nonhuman who has a right to her otherness - her own personality traits, trauma, needs and desires. The way I feel about her is really the way we should feel about all nonhumans. Without technological incisions, it is difficult to perceive the worlds of others but this does not mean we are free from the responsibility of protecting them. We must make the effort. It requires policy, respect and empathy on our part to provide nonhumans with the space to live their lives fruitfully without threat to their habitats and populations.

Photography is but one medium that enables us to look-with nonhumans and expand our visuality. Now, when taking a photograph, I contemplate what actually matters. I ask myself, who is this photograph for? Is it purely for documentation or does it satisfy some human-centric end? Will it matter when I'm no longer here? Maybe, but most likely not. Not in the sense of any large-scale change. I like to believe that the power of photography lies within its discerning qualities. A photograph untaken. Perhaps that's what Ivy has been trying to tell me all along - that the only thing that truly matters is how we coexist with others in the short time we have left.

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