THE EARLY MODERN SPECIES TRANSLATED:
UNDERSTANDING SPECIES ADJACENCY IN EARLY MODERN TEXTS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores attitudes toward nonhuman species in an effort to account for the acceptance of talking and reasoning animals in pre-Cartesian literature. It analyzes early modern Bestiaries and Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* to see how various species are addressed in different genres and conventions. Through these explorations we see that the human-animal divide, rather than staying rigid as one expects, is marked by its fluidity and acceptance of shared traits.
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The research and writing of this thesis is dedicated to my dog, Rogue, and all of the humans who helped along the way.

Many thanks,
Stephanie Albrecht
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INTRODUCTION

The Cartesian influence on Early Modern Animal studies has encouraged scholars to understand ‘the human’ through its perceived opposite, ‘the animal.’ Laurie Shannon notes in her essay, “Invisible Parts,” that “the boundaries of the ‘human’ and the ‘animal’ are foundationally blurred by the fact that neither concept can proceed without utter dependency on the other as its negative case” (Shannon 138). Yet, Early Modern texts do not always show these two concepts as complete opposites held together only by negation. The writers rather allow for moments of adjacency, that is, a fluctuating and reciprocal relationship that exists between all species. This is largely due to the fact that pre-modern literature borrows from a tradition of Aristotelian ideas, Plutarchian transfiguration literature, medieval bestiaries, and that they were socially and culturally on the cusp of a “narrowing gap” with animals according to Keith Thomas (Thomas 117). This thesis seeks to shift from the post-Cartesian perspective that humans and animals are opposites, and explore texts through the lens of species adjacency. I will examine two bestiaries—Historie of the Foure-Footed Beasts by Edward Topsell, and History of the Brute by Wolfgang Franzius—and Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream. This thesis argues that these texts complicate the boundaries of ‘the human’ with the presence of talking, thinking, and feeling animals and nonhuman characters. While many scholars have discussed what it means to be human in opposition to the animal, I intend to look through the lens of species adjacency and observe how the fluid relationships and boundaries between species destabilizes human and animal identity.

The term and context of adjacency come from Foucault's book The Order of Things, which seeks to delineate epistemic shifts between the Early Modern and Modern periods.
Adjacency signifies a relationship which brings about resemblances, or connections. Adjacent things exist next to another one without exclusion or opposition. Through their proximity, the two objects' similarities and differences become apparent and bind them together. Additionally, adjacency acts as the intersection between these two things; it shows a mobile relationship where each side experiences an exchange of power.

I will also draw from Descartes *Discourse on the Method* as many other Early Modern Animal scholars have done. As I will note in my review of their work, Descartes is frequently attributed with the creation of our modern relationship to animals. Descartes’ *Discourse on the Method* was a treatise “demonstrating the existence of God and of the soul” (Descartes 17). At the beginning of his examination into the separation of animals and humans, he acknowledges that the boundary between the two species is indistinct; “I found precisely all those which may exist in us independently of all the power of thinking and consequently without being in any measure owing to the soul, and of which it has been said above that the nature distinctively consists in thinking, functions in which the animals void of reason may be said to wholly resemble us” (Descartes 19). Descartes acknowledges the-- as I term it-- non-anthropomorphic being that Early Moderns had a relationship with. He then complicates this by saying that his new understanding of God and the rational soul has led him to discover that this animal is actually just performing automatic responses like a machine. In this fifth part of his treatise, he creates a strong distinction between animals and humans stating that “we ought not to confound speech with the natural movements which indicate the passions, and can be imitated by machines as well as manifested by animals; nor must it be thought with certain of the ancients, that the brutes speak, although we do not understand their language” (Descartes 19). Descartes’ work influences a new paradigm in the human-animal divide which has firm boundaries rather than
unsettled ones. Because so many scholars have discussed his works I am only using his work to frame my thesis and the shift in boundaries between humans and animals.

While this thesis accounts for writings from the Early Modern period, there is a long history of humans writing about animals which must be discussed before proceeding. Beginning with Aristotle’s *Politics*, man is described as “by nature a political animal” (Jowett 2). In that same text it is also said that “man is the only animal who she has endowed with the gift of speech” (Jowett 3). Aristotle’s placement of man and animal under the same species line interestingly troubles our understanding of them as complete opposites; however, it should be noted that Aristotle frames the species in a hierarchical way which still favors man. While Aristotle creates an ontological space for species to complicate the boundaries of humans and animals, he still grants a lot of privilege to man. For instance, he states that “the ox is the poor man’s slave” imbuing the text with economic, class, and racial connotations. Yet, he later deconstructs slavery acknowledging it often is a social construct and that “the slave is a part of the master, a living but separated part of his bodily frame” (Jowett 6). The ox and the poor man thus reflect a similar construction through the slave and master rhetoric applied in both scenarios. Through this we can see that the ox, though a slave and socially on the lowest tier, is part of the body of its master which complicates the division of species.

Aristotle also elucidates an early example of adjacency in his book *History of Animals*, which philosophizes on the anatomical and observational differences between species. In Book Seven he states “Certain animals at the same time are receptive of some learning and instruction, some from each other, some from humans, that is all that have some hearing (not just those that hear sounds but also those that distinguish the difference between the signs)” (Aristotle 215).
Here Aristotle divides a line between humans and animals, but is still thinking about how the species can learn from each other.

In both of Aristotle’s works he mentions the three souls—Nutritive, Sensitive, and Rational—and though he notes that all animals have a sensitive soul, only humans can have a rational soul. This is an early discussion of human exceptionalism, “the idea of a bordered humanity cordoned off by some exclusive and defining feature from the entire balance of all other creaturely kinds, while they, in turn, are herded into the contracted fold of ‘the animal’” (Shannon, “Invisible Parts” 137). Yet, in Aristotle’s Politics man is an ‘animal’ which appears to complicate this desire for separation between species. There is another opposition in reading the hierarchy of Aristotle’s soul which Shannon notes, “[it] emphasizes the degree to which supposed higher life forms partake of or participate in all of the forms beneath them” (“Invisible Parts” 140). Aristotle’s complication forces us to re-evaluate human-animal relationships and question if the boundaries between them have always as defined as our post-Cartesian moment dictates.

Biblical literature has also accounted for animals in ways that highlight how dominant religious ideology can affect human-animal relationships. In particular, the tale of Genesis produces a dominative relationship between humans and animals, with the latter traditionally being seen as the lesser and opposite as it has no reasonable soul and is not made in God’s image. Upon their creation, God says to Adam and Eve “replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:28 KJV). With specific attention paid to ‘subdue,’ meaning “to bring into subjection by conquest or physical force” (OED), and ‘dominion,’ meaning “The power or right of governing and controlling; sovereign authority; lordship,
sovereignty; rule, sway; control, influence” (OED), the human-animal relationship is full of conflict. This passage is often seen as the prime example for writing about human-animal relationships and is continuously referred to in Animal Studies. However just one book later, the writer of Genesis switches tone and states that Adam and Eve should “dress [the Garden of Eden] and keep it” (Genesis 2:15 KJV). The words ‘dress’ and ‘keep’ denote guidance and watching, which are more aligned with the act of stewardship. Stewardship, as opposed to dominion over the land and animals, implies acts of caretaking and ethical responsibility.

Through his new role as caretaker, God creates the animals and asks Adam to name them with the intention that these will be Adam’s companions. The dynamics presented are more friendly and caring than the dominant rule suggested in book one of Genesis. Within one text, there are two passages which feature two very different human-animal relationships.

Biblical tales have also featured talking animals, often thought to be used to teach a lesson or moral like in Aesop’s fables. In Numbers, Balaam is riding his ass to speak to Balak which angers God, and an angel is sent to block their path in the road. However, only the ass sees the angel and when it tries to avoid it, Balaam smites the ass. Balaam tries again to turn the ass, but the ass refuses and is beaten. Upon the third beating:

The Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee. And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? and he said, Nay. (Numbers 22:28-30 KJV)
The passage starts by saying The Lord opens the mouth of the animal, which could imply speech being granted temporarily through the powers of God, the physical presence of The Lord, or the ability to understand the translated animal. All three are reasonable narratives; what is interesting is the unmitigated lines that follow. By omitting the presence of The Lord when the ass next speaks, it suggests the idea of a sentient and reasonable ass who is capable of speech on its own. When outlining the changes in how the ass speaks we see competing narratives evolve. While the animal can be read as anthropomorphic or as a moral lesson, we also read this passage as an example of animals having language.

I account for the duality of seminal texts like the Bible and Aristotle to demonstrate the complications that have risen out of defining the human-animal relationship. Pre-Cartesian texts offer a number of ways to navigate the human-animal divide and while my thesis focuses on Early Modern literature, the discourses and ideas often exist prior to this period. This is because, as Raymond Williams says, “any culture includes available elements of its past” (Williams 122). It is important to understand residual, or past, ideas in order to properly explore Early Modern literature from a pre-Cartesian moment. As the first book of Genesis and the first line of the ass speaking show, there was a history, prior to Descartes, of writers thinking animals could not speak and that they should be ruled by humans. This line of inquiry depicts a strong division between humans and animals, which Laurie Shannon reinforces in her “Invisible Parts” article; “In the European and Anglophone west, of course, theological models have long prevailed to urge a radical difference in kind between humans and the other animals” (Shannon 138). Yet Aristotle’s all-encompassing term animal, the second book of Genesis, and the ass speaking by himself display early writers complicating the boundary between what is ‘the human’ and what is ‘the animal.’
Literary studies began to bring the animal into focus around the 1990s, most notably in Derrida’s 1997 speech “The Animal That Therefore I Am (And More to Follow).” Derrida begins by questioning his naked shame in front of his cat and re-reads the Genesis myth. He finds that a boundary between human and animal is the self-purported shame in the recognition of nudity; “in principle, with the exception of man, no animal has ever thought to dress itself.” (Derrida 5). This seemingly complicates my argument for an unstable boundary within the human-animal divide. However; he further states that “the animal is naked without consciousness of being naked, it is thought that modesty remains as foreign to it as does immodesty” (Derrida 5). I pause here to reflect on the terms ‘modesty’ and ‘immodesty’ Derrida has brought into the discussion to highlight that various cultures and eras have had differing opinions on the meanings of those terms, particularly with clothing. His speech is often seen as the foundation for animal studies as it brought to question the boundaries between humans and animals. Derrida coined this inquiry “limitrophy” and sought to find the “limit as rupture or abyss between those who say ‘we men,’ ‘I, a human,’ and what this man among men who says ‘we,’ what he calls the animal or animals” (12-13). Derrida’s use of the phrase “he calls” highlights important questions in Animal Studies-- what do animals call themselves; what do animals call humans; how can we ever find the limitrophy if we define the animal as our opposite. He opens up the investigation for the social and cultural divisions between humans and animals, and forces the listeners to re-evaluate who they think they are.

Once Animal Studies had been established, it was not long before its attention was turned to the Early Modern era. The first wave of Early Modern Animal Studies envisioned animals in texts as emblematic or symbolic. Karen Edward’s article, “Milton’s Reformed Animals: An Early Modern Bestiary” participated in such discourse. Her goal was to categorize each of the
animals named in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* according to type and genre. Through this exploration of beasts, she asserted that “Early Modern animals, like other social artifacts, are constructed according to the needs of cultural consumers” (121), and that “Milton’s writing demonstrates that he had come to the realization that to represent an animal is to address and establish a cultural-political position” (122). Much like Erica Fudge asserts in her book *Brutal Reasoning*, “all too often modern scholars read metaphor and symbol where there is an actual animal to be seen” (Fudge 6), the animals discussed in this work are seen as anthropomorphized creatures representative of humanity.

The next major wave in Early Modern Animal Studies was often referred to as Renaissance Non-Humanism, and sought to explain how humans and animals lived with each other. This early 2000s shift in focus brought scholars to question the Cartesian human/animal divide. In Laurie Shannon’s book *The Accommodated Animal* she notes that the modern division of human and animal is introduced around the time of Descartes’ *Discourse of the Method*, which refers to animal as soulless automatons. She locates the source of her “cosmopolity” in politics, and reasons that animals were given the same entitlement and liberties as humans—per Aristotle’s *Poetics* and biblical passages—and discusses infringements on those rights. Shannon states that “humans and animals rubbed shoulders as ‘fellow-commoners’ in public spaces with rich consequences for representations and the political imagination” (Shannon 8). Her argument largely relied upon close proximity between humans and animals which prompted a different political relationship as the animals now needed more rules and regulations. This proximal relationship does contribute to the fluctuating boundaries between human and animal, but Shannon focuses on animals traversing the political world and not on how their relationships complicate the human identity.
Within the sub-field of Renaissance non-humanism Erica Fudge similarly began to question the Cartesian effect on humans and animals. Her book *Brutal Reasoning* observes the impact Descartes’ work had on the modern scholar reading the nonhuman. She states that “the foundation of the discourse of reason- that humans and animals are crucially different on the basis of their possession or lack of reason- remains even as it is challenged by the very logic that proclaims it” (Fudge 38). Fudge articulates the blurring distinctions between humans and animals as well, however she notes it is due to negative behavior from a human. Humans, much like in Tillyard’s depiction of the Great Chain of Being from *The Elizabethan Picture*, could descend into animalism from vicious or lewd behavior, but the nonhuman experienced no such mobility. Her work similarly notes the anachronistic impact Descartes has had on modern scholars, but she sets out to answer largely different questions than my own thesis. Fudge sees the animal as “the necessary other to reify the human self” (Wyatt 150) and questions what it means for animals and humans to be opposites. My thesis will extend her argument and explore the complications and destabilization of boundaries that arise from looking at texts through species adjacency.

Through this thesis I will call our attention to a potential new wave in Early Modern Animal studies. It is my intention to assert that the human-animal relationship was a destabilizing force during this era which questioned what it meant to be human and animal. Because so many abilities like thinking, feeling, language, and creating were not only found in the human, modern scholars are forced to rethink what separates the animal from the human. Rather than just thinking of the animal and human as opposite, as has been done previously, I propose we examine texts through the lens species adjacency. By addressing the fluid relationships between animals, humans, and nonhumans—as is the case in *A Midsummer Night’s*
Dream—malleable boundaries are revealed, subverting the notion of human exceptionalism. The lack of uniquely human abilities in this era allows us to re-conceptualize the impact animals and nonhumans had on framing what we now consider to be a human identity.

My thesis will address a variety of texts in an effort to show how these boundaries were not complicated by a merely random occurrence nor isolated to one form. I explore the Early Modern bestiaries and plays in order to argue that the pre-Cartesian texts established fluid relational dynamics between species and suggest the existence of a universal experience amongst humans, animals, and Nature. Chapter 1 examines the popular bestiaries Historie of the Foure-Footed Beasts by Edward Topsell and History of the Brute by Wolfgang Franzius. This chapter locates the foundation for understanding the fluid boundaries between species through the bestiaries numerous examples of cross-species, hybrid species, talking animals and comparative anatomy. Chapter 2 advances the argument for an unstable human-animal divide through a reading of Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream.
CHAPTER ONE: UNDERSTANDING SPECIES ADJACENCY IN EARLY MODERN BESTIARIES

Natural history books and bestiaries were popular texts that circulated in the pre-modern era. Their contents were comprised of information on species from all over the world, often including the location of the species, their etymology, medicinal purposes, and relevant tales. The scholarship on these works frequently follows the Renaissance humanist model that thinks “to explain the animal is to explain the human” (Fudge 6). The symbolic understanding of the animals in these texts obfuscates the real animals that existed and the relationships they had with humans. This chapter proposes to reexamine the species boundaries through the lens of species adjacency in order to understand the complicated relationship between humans and animals. This chapter will therefore read two important Early Modern bestiaries—Edward Topsell’s *Historie of the Foure-Footed Beasts* and Wolfgang Franzius’ *History of the Brutes*—for moments where the boundaries between humans and animals are destabilized. Through the presence of hybrid creatures, comparative anatomy, and animal language, these early bestiaries demonstrate a lack of human exceptionalism that secures the human identity from an animal one.

Early Modern bestiaries drew from the tradition of Medieval bestiaries, which in turn drew from Christian theology and classical tales. All bestiaries find their predecessor in the Greek work *Physiologus*, which interprets “antique lore regarding animals, birds, and some stones and trees, in terms of Christian vices and virtues, and basic tenets of the Church” (Baxter 29). Although it was written sometime between the 3rd and 4th centuries by an unknown author, its frequent republication and translation in the Middle Ages contributed to the popularity of the bestiary genre.
The first version of a bestiary in the Medieval era was Isidore of Seville's 7th century *Etymologia* which abstains from moral lessons learned through animals, focusing instead on facts about the creatures. In this text he drew from classical authors like Pliny and Aristotle in order to create an early working encyclopedia about a range of topics. This became the working model for future bestiaries as he included observations, etymology, and classical sources. His applied rhetoric echoes the scene in Genesis where Adam names the animals before him; “the force [*vis*] of a word or a name is inferred through interpretation ... for when you have seen whence a word has originated, you understand its force more quickly” (Isidore 54). His work is frequently referenced in later works such as the *Aberdeen Bestiary*: “In his book of Etymologies, Isidore says that the raven picks out the eyes in corpses first, as the Devil destroys the capacity for judgement in carnal men, and proceeds to extract the brain through the eye. The raven extracts the brain through the eye, as the Devil, when it has destroyed our capacity for judgement, destroys our mental faculties” (f. 37). This author highlights the common critique of the work, that Isidore does not allegorize the animals. Isidore’s original text only states that “This bird seeks the eyes of a corpse before any other part” (Isidore 267) ; the subsequent author elucidates the moral argument from that information.

Medieval scholars have read these bestiaries as substitutes or allegories for the Bible. In Sarah Kay’s article “Post-human Philology and the Ends of Time in Medieval Bestiaries” she argues that the chapters within the medieval bestiaries “are inevitably plotted against the massive arc which reaches from creation, Eden, and fall to incarnation, resurrection and final judgment” (Kay 480). As many bestiaries explicitly engaged and created moral arguments within their own work, scholars like Kay often focus on those elements rather than the zoological or categorical. In Ron Baxter’s book *Bestiaries and Their Users in the Middle Ages* he similarly argues that the
bestiaries are “informed by a motive of Christian didacticism. . . . We are not in any sense dealing with zoology” (qtd in Animal Encounters 70). Michel Zink makes a similar point: “in medieval writing the animal, like the rest of creation, is unworthy of attention except insofar as it is a bearer of meaning. The elucidation of this meaning is the whole purpose of the bestiaries” (qtd in Animal Encounters 70). For these scholars, and many others, the religious elements dominate the work, making little else noteworthy.

There are some scholars who disagree and believe that works like Etymologia and Physiologus should be read as a textbook on natural history and not theology. Zoologists Wilma George and Brunsdon Yapp argue that these works should be studied “not, as they are generally held to be, merely compendia of old wives’ tales and religious symbolism, amusing or boring according to your taste, but documents that are important for any serious history of medieval science” (qtd in Animal Encounters 71). When accounting for the actual animal in the text, scholars also comment on the animal in the page. The Medieval bestiaries were made from parchment, “a processed form of animal skin” (Kay “Legible Skins” 13), written with “goose feather pen in hand, oak gall ink in a horn inkwell close by; . . . reading involves renewing this contact of [animal] skin on [human] skin” (Kay “Legible Skins” 13). These readings highlight how the human learns through practical relationships with physical and real animals rather than just the moral or allegorized once that the first readings offered.

Moving from the medieval period to the Early Modern period there was a “profound shift in sensibilities regarding the natural environment and growing concern about Man’s relationship to other species” (Thomas 4). Benjamin Arbel locates this in the comparative human-animal anatomy found in French texts like L’Histoire de la nature des oyseaux [The Description of the Nature of Birds] by Pierre Belon du Mans. In such texts, the side by side
anatomical comparison between the two species creates a complication between “the received belief that humans are unique and created in the image of God, and...the notion of the human as an animal” (Arbel 221). Arbel’s argument rethinks the human-animal divide with visualizations and illustrations of anatomy. My thesis similarly addresses moments where humans and animals are looked at comparatively; however, these Early Modern bestiaries do not provide visualizations of the human species. Instead, I will argue that these texts complicate the human-animal divide through the consistent presence of reasoning, thinking, feeling, and speaking animals.

An animal's use of voice throughout these Bestiaries complicates the traditional notion that language is a unique human capacity. Aristotle’s *Politics*, from which many Early Modern writers drew, claimed that man was the only animal gifted with speech. While many Early Modern thinkers were inspired by Aristotle’s work, they also complicated the notion that animals were not capable of speech. In 1585 Montaigne argued a universal species language;

tis not to be supposed that nature should have denied that to us which she has given to several other animals: for what other than speech is this faculty we observe in them of complaining, rejoicing, calling to one another for succor, and the softer murmurings of love, which they perform with the voice? And why should they not speak to one another? they speak very well to us, and we to them; in how many several ways do we speak to us dogs, and they answer us? (Montaigne 13)

Montaigne concludes that animals have speech and that it is easily observable. While his comments on the capacity for animal language could be attributed to the emitted vocables Descartes discusses-- where animals can mimic speech or produce vocables but have no meaning attributed to the sound-- his emphasis on the words speech and speak offer another reading. The
OED notes that ‘speech’ means “The act of speaking; the natural exercise of the vocal organs; the utterance of words or sentences; oral expression of thought or feeling” (OED). Montaigne emphasizes the emotive elements of the animal’s speech stating that they complain, rejoice, and murmur with love. He observes an emotional component and meaning in their communication and conceives that this is a natural element amongst all thinking beings. Montaigne’s conclusion that nature provided no basis for a boundary, either communicatively or emotively, sets a strong precedent for the way Early Modern writers began to question what elements separated the animals from the humans.

The human-animal divide returns to the natural history discourse in the 17th-century with Descartes’ *Discourse on the Method*. Published in 1637, this six-part philosophical treatise draws a firm line between humans and animals by claiming that animals are only capable of seeming human. This performance of humanism calls attention to their lack of souls and reason. Descartes’ treatment of creatures serves to create the division between humans and animals. Regarding language, some animals, like parrots, can emit vocables and even sound like they are speaking;

nor does this inability arise from a want of organs: for we observe that magpies and parrots can utter words like ourselves, and are yet unable to speak as we do, that is, so as to show that they understand what they say; in place of which men born deaf and dumb, and thus not less, but rather more than brutes, destitute of the organs which others use in speaking, are in habit of spontaneously inventing certain signs by which they discover their thoughts to those who, being usually in their company, have leisure to learn their language. And this proves not only that brutes have less reason than man, but that they have none at all. (Descartes 23)
Descartes’ assertions contrast with the images Montaigne provided earlier; whereas Montaigne emphasized abilities and emotions, Descartes focuses on the anatomy of an animal to further his argument. By reducing a parrot to its vocal organs and focusing on how they often mimic human speech and sounds, Descartes argues that the animal must not have any reason at all. If it were to have reason then it would not mimic human speech, but would participate in full dialogue since it has the proper organ. He draws this conclusion by comparing the birds to disabled men who still find ways to communicate through various forms of sign language even without the vocal organ. Through this analysis he recreates a distinct human-animal divide where the capacity for language is what makes us human.

Edward Topsell’s (1572-1625) *Historie of the Foure-Footed Beasts* was first published in 1607 with the intention of being a translation and improvement on Conrad Gessner’s *Historia Animalium*. The following year he published *The History of Serpents* which, due to the popularity and endurance of his works, were compiled together and republished in 1658. While there were many natural history books published in the Early Modern period, few received republication. His work, specifically *The History of the Foure-Footed Beasts* combines descriptions of fantastic creatures, like the gorgon, with descriptions about common animals to create a comprehensive encyclopedia of nature. While Topsell draws primarily from Conrad Gessner’s *Historia Animalium* he also includes information from Pliny, Aristotle, anonymous sources, and old wives’ tales.

Prior critical readings frequently focus on the emblematic state of animals in Topsell’s work, often overlooking the real animals within the text to focus on the human. One such reading by Dugan and Steele suggests that the material is a fable used to teach humans a moral lesson. The view that a speaking animal is only used as a tool for a human to learn commodifies the
body and history of animals and anthropomorphizes animal language and actions. Dugan and Steele suggest that the work is "easy to understand as mere fictions, with the animals mere materializations of certain moral qualities, like credulousness, gluttony, and meekness" (Dugan and Steele 47). However, if we shift our reading and locate the animals as real and not “fictions” the morals that they display can help us understand some of the complications that arise from modern scholars dividing the species. When the narrowed gap between species is accounted for in these texts, human exceptionalism is displaced and the animal that was once seen as anthropomorphized is now its own reasonable being.

Our post-Cartesian understanding of the relationship between humans and animals provides a textual, and cultural, misreading of texts. By not acknowledging the species adjacency present in pre-Cartesian works and society, we will always contribute a set of modern assumptions and biases to find anthropomorphizing where there was originally none. Montaigne writes a typical assertion of species adjacency in his *Essays* only some years prior to Topsell's publication; "When I play with my cat, who knows whether I do not make her more sport than she makes me?" (Montaigne *Essays* 1). Montaigne’s quote highlights the Early Modern understanding of species dynamics; by not assuming that playing with an animal is exclusively a human action he contradicts anthropomorphic readings to assert that desires, reasons, and actions are universally experienced.

Wolfgang Franzius’ (1564-1628) natural history book, *History of the Brutes*, written in 1613, utilizes biblical narratives, natural history, and tales to challenge our understanding of species relationships. Franzius specifically writes this treatise on the nature of animals to further a scholarly and religious understanding of the world. As I mentioned in my introduction, biblical literature allowed for the possibility of multiple kinds of human-animal relationships. In his text
Franzius acknowledges that Genesis places animals under man's dominion, but he complicates this position by saying "many places of the Scripture cannot be interpreted without the knowledge of Animals" (Franzius 3). Whereas earlier I addressed Fudge’s claim that to know an animal was to know a human, here to know an animal is to know the writings of God. In a traditional understanding of the Early Modern period there is a hierarchy with God at the top followed by humans and then animals. Franzius’ statement and work challenges the notion of a stable hierarchy and relationship between species.

The Early Modern bestiaries confront what it means to be human through their writings on the fluid dynamics between humans and animals. The texts explore hybrid and fantastic creatures like Sphinxes and Unicorns, which complicate species boundaries by being comprised of many animals including man. The bestiaries place humans within the animal, not above, creating the image that the species are in one body together without a hierarchy immediately implanted. Because the human is placed into the animal so easily it brings us to question where the boundary between the two rests, and can the animal enter the human just as seamlessly? The texts also complicate the perceived border that surrounds humanity by featuring talking, reasoning, and feeling animals. By following the precedent set by Montaigne, these texts contribute to the idea that language is a universal ability. What these Early Modern bestiaries show us is that humans and animals were not conceived as complete opposites. By studying them in the liminal space they existed in, and not through their dependency on negation, we can learn something different about what it meant to exist as a species in the Early Modern period.

Early Modern bestiary accounts of hybrid creatures, in which multiple species exist inside one body, necessarily destabilize boundaries between species. Topsell addresses the hybridity of the Sphinx by providing both its origin story from Greek tales and the species of
which it is comprised: “Hydra brought forth the chimera, chimera by Orthrus the sphynx” (Topsell 17). The chimera was typically described as an amalgamation of a lion, snake, and goat. while Orthrus was described as a two-headed dog, sometimes depicted with a snake’s tail. The parentage of the Sphinx embraces a fluidity of species; yet, it is Topsell’s description of the Sphinx which is most revealing. Topsell summarizes the appearance of the Sphinx as "the face and hand of a mayde, the body of a Dogge, the wings of a byrd, the voice of a man, the claws of a Lyon, and the tayle of a Dragon" (17). Neither the bird, nor the human are accounted for in the lineage Topsell provides.

This hybrid creature displaces the boundary between species not just through its multitudes, but through its subversion of human exceptionalism. The insertion of the human when no precipitator exists implies that humanoid factors—like a face, hand, and voice—are not reliant upon the presence of a human parent. What does it mean that the ‘voice of a man’ can exist outside of a man’s body? It implies that it is not something inherent unto the human, and that an animal can access it. While voice can simply indicate sound emittance, Topsell’s inclusion of the prepositional phrase ‘of a man’ indicates that that the Sphinx produces reasonable speech patterns. When a human is not needed to produce the voice of a human within a species, the human-animal divide is not only complicated but destabilized. If their language, voice, hands, and faces can exist outside of their bodies and cross species lines unknowingly, what other seemingly human attributes can be subverted in a similar manner?

Topsell’s placement of the Sphinx and the Sphinga within the ‘Ape’ section and in the same passage in his book reifies the dissolution of boundaries that occurs from combining ‘real’ animals with fantastic creatures in his book. While destabilization is happening within the species relationships, it is also represented on the page through the co-mingling in the passages.
The Sphinx, according to Topsell, begets a type of ape bred in Ethiopia and India called the Sphinga, or sometimes Sphinx. This ape shares a few characteristics with its predecessor;

His body rough like apes, but his breasts up to his necke, piled and smooth without hair: the face is very round yet sharpe and piked, having the breasts of women, and their favour or visage much like them: In that part of their body which is bare without haire, there is a certayne red thing rising in a round circle like Millet seed, which giveth greate grace and comlienesse to their colour, which in the middle parte is humaine. (17)

Topsell’s understands this creature through difference; The creature is known not by what it is, but what it is not. The sphinga is “like” an ape, but has womanly breasts and a womanly face; it is hairless, except for the body parts which have hair; it resembles a round pile of seeds, yet is simultaneously human. With each new resemblance we have a less clear view on specific boundaries separating the species, whereas with the description of the Sphinx, Topsell located and named each body with a corresponding species. While that description showed the multitude of forms species adjacency allowed for in one body, the Sphinga’s description highlights the dissolution of boundaries between species.

Topsell complicates these boundaries again by attributing vocal elements and emotive patterns to the Sphinga’s speech. Topsell notes in the passage that the Sphinga’s “voice is very like a mans but not articulate, sounding as if one did speake hastily with indignation or sorrow” (17). The key word from this sentence being “like” which notes that the two things—Sphinga speech and human speech—are similar but not the same thing. This is not to be confused with anthropomorphism which suggests that the ability to speak is entirely human and that the writer gave the animal that specific quality. Topsell is rather showing that the Sphinga contains that quality already, but as it is a fantastical creature and the average reader would not have
encountered it—or anything like it—he draws a comparison to the human so they have a reference point. While Topsell seemingly privileges man’s speech by stating that the Sphinga is less ‘articulate,’ he then adds the emotive elements to the Sphinga’s speech. The expression of ‘sorrow’ and ‘indignation’ echo Montaigne’s observation of animal voice. This added qualification places the Sphinga’s inarticulate speech on par with an expressive man. While the articulate man is arguably still privileged, the Sphinga and the expressive speaker are equal.

The Early Modern bestiaries also explored relationships where man and animal were in a complex state of reflection, becoming so much like one another it was impossible to tell who influenced what further destabilizing species and hierarchical lines. Did the Lion always have an innate kingly sense to him, or did a King always have an innate leonine aspect to him? It is also important to note that Lions have been called the ruler of beasts since the 7th century in Isidore of Seville’s medieval bestiary. Topsell enters into this emulative discourse when he writes "So also is the lion the ruler of the heart of man" (461). The Lion is not relegated to only ruling beasts as he was in the medieval bestiary; instead, he rules the heart, which rules man. The Lion in Topsell’s passage mirrors the function of man, which is to rule others. It then displays a fluid relationship with man, which allows the Lion to rule over him. Topsell’s connection of the species through the heart creates a universal demographic: “The heart—groups living creatures together as related, rather than dividing them as distinct as the lens of species might require” (Shannon “Invisible Parts” 151). This new species relationship subverts the hierarchy presented in Genesis Book One, as in this version the Lion, not the human, is the ruler of all species.

Franzius discusses the interiority of the ass and its capacity for emotion by comparing it to the popular humoral system, notably stating that the ass “hath a very large heart, but no gall at all” (Franzius 108). In Gail Kern Paster’s influential work on the connections between the
humoral system, passions, and organs, she argues: “since many of the body’s organ systems, and hence the bodily fluids produced by them, belonged not just to human beings but to animals as well, it followed that humans and animals shared in the psychological consequences—the self-experience—of possessing them. (Paster 112) Her statement accounts for the fluidity between species and addresses that this was a common way to view humans and animals. Early Modern thinkers connected emotions and feelings with their present state of bodies and bodily functions. For instance, the four humors—Sanguine, Choleric, Melancholic, and Phlegmatic—were connected to the liver, spleen, gallbladder, and lungs respectively. The gallbladder was connected to a Melancholic disposition. When the humor was imbalanced it provoked pensiveness and avoidance. Franzius indicates these qualities in the ass when discussing its actions and personality; “When once he has fallen, he is always scared of that place” (Franzius 109). He suggests that the ass remembers bad experiences and avoids specific locations because of the imbalanced gallbladder. The ass’s emotions and reasoning are not anthropomorphized as it is not seen as taking on a human characteristic. Rather, the very interiority of the animal contextualized with the periods’ humoral knowledge suggests a universal capacity for such characteristics.

The anatomization of animals in these texts would normally suggest an implied distance between the animal and human species; however, as Franzius’ passage indicates, different species can mirror each other’s function of internal organs. When Franzius’ employs the familiar rhetoric of the humours in the ass’s body he destabilizes the traditional boundary found between humans and animals. There is a classical history to the assumption that human and animal bodies functioned in similar manners. In Galen’s early work Use of Parts he “assumed cross-species analogy; he assumed that the bodies of apes, dogs, and livestock were directly relevant evidence
of the human for which they substituted” (Shannon “Invisible Parts” 146). In the comparative analysis of the animal bodies, both Topsell and Franzius recall the residual “identification across the species barrier” (Paster 150) within the humoral system. This complicates the claim for the uniqueness of the human, as both authors show typical ‘human’ qualities as universal in all species.

The bestiaries develop their discourse beyond anatomical comparisons, and in Franzius’ case he explores how an emulative relationship between a chameleon and a tyrant can subvert our understanding of each species. At first Franzius draws a seemingly simple analogy between the two; the chameleon moves slowly and "Tyrants at first do reign and dissemble piety, but when once they have got the power into their own hands, they then shew what before they did but dissemble, then committing all manner of wickedness” (Franzius 235). He then compares the imitative quality both possess, as well as their perceived mildness. Franzius says on a preceding page that the chameleon cannot imitate the colors red or white, and then continues to say "The Chamelion when he is afraid, seemeth to be very gentle, and mild; like as the Tyrant is sometimes fain to dissemble himself mild, but cannot imitate white and red; i.e. true of innocency and modesty” (235). The tyrant is no longer like the chameleon; instead, the chameleon reflects the personality and appearance of a tyrant. At times the text uses the abilities of the chameleon to read or understand the personality of the tyrant, while at other times it uses the countenance of the tyrant to understand the appearance and actions of the chameleon; however, the passages do not rely upon a humoral or organ reassemblage like the earlier examples. The relationship between the chameleon and the tyrant moves beyond an anatomical explanation, instead suggesting they both complicate their own species boundary by resembling the personality of the other.
The tyrant aligns with a traditional reading where “one’s humanity could be lost by engaging in vicious behavior” (Wyett 150). Under this scope the animals are uniquely without sin, but cannot ascend or descend the species line as they have no self-awareness nor ability to be either “virtuous or vicious” (Fudge “Brutal Reasoning” 66). Yet, in the second quote the chameleon only seems to be innocent like the tyrant, with the implication that something else lurks underneath the animal’s appearance. By using the human’s known vicious behavior to discuss the actions of the animal, Franzius makes the chameleon complicit in the tyrant’s actions. Furthermore, the chameleon itself is shown to lie, or sin, which forces us to question whether that is a human or animal quality. The tyrant lies and is animalized, while the chameleon lies and is humanized. Through these descriptions we can see that our reading of species in the Early Modern period cannot just be that they are opposites, but that they are in a constantly changing relationship which prompts us to rethink some our ideas about a stable human identity. By suggesting that the chameleon emulates the sins of the tyrant, the species elevates itself across the boundary of the human while the tyrant follows the traditional descent into animalism. This boundary crossing happens simultaneously which suggests a fluid element to the human-animal divide during the Early Modern era.

Franzius also draws a resemblance between the chameleon and an actor, and its doubled role in the passage reflects how the species interacts with its environment. He states "And therefore whatever colour is next to him, that colour seemeth to reflect from his body: a fit resemblance of Stage-players, who can be any thing for their profit and advantage" (Franzius 233). When we read this quote through the lens of species adjacency we can see the chameleon alters its identity to its background to account for physical adjacency. The color of the background is reflected or mirrored notably “from” the body of the chameleon. In a broader
ecological perspective, this suggests an interconnectedness not just between species but with species and their environments.

The resemblance of animals as artists complicates the idea of animals as producers for humans instead demonstrating how they produce art for themselves. While animals have always been a part of the economic world for their value in labor, meat, and material, these texts indicate that animals can influence and produce art form voluntarily. Comparing the scholar to the bear, Franzius observes that the bear is a sculptor who creates the form of her cubs; “the Bears, at first when young, are very deformed creatures, until she by licking them hath brought them into shape” (60). He then compares that action to a scholar's first work being "not so polite and well digested as the next is" (Franzius 60). The two species are similar as they both equally love what they produce; for the bear, this is their young, and for the scholar, it is his work. Through both the analogy with the scholar, and analysis of its movements, the Bear is seen as affecting content, form, and art. Arbel pointed out that authors utilized comparative anatomical illustrations to dissolve a human-anatomical divide in some of the French bestiaries. Franzius uses a similar comparison by rhetorically establishing the scholar and bear as artist and/or producer.

Reflecting upon what divides humans and animals, Descartes would not see the bear as intentionally creating. Instead he would theorize that “although such machines might execute many things with equal or perhaps greater perfection than any of us, they would, without doubt, fail in certain others from which it could be discovered that they did not act from knowledge” (Descartes 22). But what happens when we see the capacity to create and affect art as not unique to human experience? The Bear’s sculpting of her cub makes both the animal an artist and an artwork, complicating what it means to be an animal and where the boundary between species lies.
The bear’s movements simultaneously complicate the division of species by functioning as a form of animal language. This aspect of animal language is brought to our attention by Derrida’s “The Animal That Therefore I Am.” In his lecture, he talks about the physical traces animals leave behind, and how those traces function as a form of writing. He first considers animal language the same way Descartes does; some animals show an ability to use signs and communication but "have always been denied the power to respond- to pretend, to lie, to cover its own tracks" (Derrida 401). Derrida then examines how an animal's ability to erase its physical presence is a form of signature or writing. While the bear is not erasing its tracks in the preceding description, its movements are defined and used to show creation. Art is a physical trace left behind meant to indicate or say something; when the bear participates in art, it also participates in traces which Derrida defines as a marker of language.

While species have previously been described to have the ‘voice of a man,’ both Topsell and Franzius explicitly display communicating animals to further show the impact universal language had on the human-animal divide. In Franzius' account of the ass, he is evidently commanded to go to the theater, and upon his arrival, he seeks out the prettiest lady there. Once he has charmed the woman, she convinces the actors to find him some water and treats. The ass "would by his gestures expres from thing of joy at the hearing of it; if any one had spoken to him, he would make some sign that he understood what he said" (Franzius 110). While the ass is not using human vocables, the humans show an understanding of his expressions, which show the two species in a reciprocal conversation. Moreover, Franzius' indicates that the ass uses signs to convey his understanding of the human language and to respond. The conversation taking place in this tale is more than just wild braying and humans assuaging a distraught beast, but a participatory and equal event. Two unique languages are being used simultaneously, but through
the context, proximity, and ability to read the body the two species are hinged together which we see when reading through the lens of species adjacency.

These accounts do more than just demonstrate universal language in the early modern era, they highlight the lack of anxiety one expects to find at the unsettled boundaries of the human. The interaction between the species highlights Fudge’s assertion that Descartes’ beast-machine was a radical departure from people’s lived experience with animals. The species find a balance of communication, each being able to express what it wants or needs from the other. The ass uses a form of reason to find the prettiest woman and expresses desire and ‘joy;’ the humans in turn acknowledge the ass’s emotions. Throughout this encounter the two species derive joy from each other’s company and conversation and neither party questions the presence of the speaking other.

Topsell similarly provides an account of a reasonable ass who communicates with his master, and through his story the living animals of the era are brought to focus and the readings of them as anthropomorphic beings or moral lessons are left behind. In Topsell's account of the ass, he tells of a trickster who taught his ass a series of tricks, such as playing dead. He draws a crowd around him and tells his ass that he must do an extreme amount of work, at which point "The Asse falleth down turneth up his heals into the air, groneth, and shutteth his eyes fast as if he had been dead" (Topsell 25). The owner looks to the crowd and convinces them to give him money since he is now poor and assless. Once he has enough money, he tells the crowd that the ass "knowing his masters poverty, counterfeited in that manner, whereby he might get money to buy him a provender." He commanded the ass to rise, but he remained listless on the ground even when beaten. Finally, the owner announces the Sultan wants to gather all of the asses in the area and have them carry pretty women in a parade in exchange for food and water; upon hearing
this the "up started the Asse, snorting and leaping for joy." The owner finally says that the ass will have to carry the ugliest woman "at which words the Asse hangeth down his ears, and understanding like a reasonable creature, began to halt as if his leg had been out of joint" (Topsell 25). The descriptions that Topsell provides suggest that the ass is not anthropomorphized nor is there a moral lesson gained through the ass. He focuses on common movements and sound like the ear, leg and snorting which create a hyper-realistic image in the mind of the reader, especially if one has encountered an ass previously. By then inserting the line “understanding like a reasonable creature” Topsell suggests that understanding and reasoning are just another one of the ass’s qualities. Topsell highlights the elements of the ass’s behavior and abilities, alongside how it would communicate with its master which shows the reader the living animal in the bestiaries, not an anthropomorphic version of one.

The bestiaries equally show the autobiographical animal, as described by Derrida, demonstrating how animals leave written traces behind further troubling our perception of the human-animal divide. Much like creating art, writing has been seen as a traditionally human activity. The embracing of animals writing leads to a questioning of the boundaries for human exceptionalism and identity. The autobiographical animal is most clearly seen in the treatment of the lion in both Topsell and Franzius. Both say that when the lion is leaving it sweeps the ground with its tail so hunters cannot follow him: “they do hid their clawes within their skin when they doe goe or run...and when they are hunted, with their tailes they cover their footsteps with earth, that so they may not be betrayed” (Topsell 461). The lion effectively leaves an initial trace which serves to signify its physical presence. Upon viewing this, or knowing of the trace in some other way, the lion recognizes its own identity. The Early Modern understanding that the lion sees the mirrored resemblance in the ground shows that animals had a complex way of
responding to ecological knowledge; the term response being key, as later philosophers, like Descartes, believed animals were incapable of responding. The lion's actions also function as a form of commentary on its own writing. Foucault says of commentary in the Early Modern episteme that "there can be no commentary unless, below the language one is reading and deciphering" (41). By acknowledging the tracks it left behind and editing what was written, the lion comments on his own language and existence.

Additionally, the creation of tracks by the lion allows him write a commentary on his own existence and identity. Through the creation of the tracks, the lion writes the original text. Then when the lion acknowledges the existence of the tracks, he simultaneously reads and begins to decipher the text to find a greater meaning. One reading could be that he discovers his own cosmic identity and realizes the way in which his physical body impacts the landscape around him. Finally, he enters the discourse by altering or commentating on the tracks left behind. Undoubtedly his action serves a purpose of concealing his identity from the hunter. However, there is also a possibility that this creates a written discourse between humans and animals previously unseen or disregarded by critics.

In order to see the significance of these moments we can hold them in comparison to the treatment of animal speech in the post-Cartesian world. Sir Thomas Browne’s 1646 *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* can be read as one natural history catalogue affected by the shift in episteme. His purpose in writing it was to observe nature empirically; through this he disputes the fantastic beasts and superstitions found in previous natural history encyclopedias. Browne initially published it only nine years after Descartes’ paradigm-changing *Discourse on the Method*. Most scholarship around Browne’s work focuses on its shift from the emblematic viewing of animals to an empiricist approach. This view, while correct in addressing the shift in Bestiary content,
overlooks the Cartesian influence as well as the significant lack of animal language. In fact, Browne does his best to anatomize beasts, much as Descartes anatomized the function of a heart and other internal organs of animals. While writing on the swan, for instance, Browne debunks the claim that swans sing before they die:

Now that which… confirmeth this opinion, is the strange and unusual conformation of the wind pipe, or vocal organ in this animal...For in its length it far exceedeth the gullet; and hath in the chest a sinuous revolution, that is, when it ariseth from the lungs, it ascendeth not directly unto the throat, but decending first into a capsulary reception of the breast bone, by a Serpentine and Trumpet recurvation it ascendeth again into the neck, and so by the length thereof a great quantity of ayr is received, and bythe figure thereof a musical modulation effected. (Brown 145)

Browne finds scientific evidence that the music we perceive to come from swans is nothing but breath mechanically ascending and descending the curvatures of the swan’s neck. The scientific exploration of the throat takes away the swan’s ability to speak and communicate. This anatomization of the swan is in stark contrast to the one Franzius gave us with the Ass. Here the animal is looked at for the sum of its parts in an attempt to address how unlike the human the Swan is. Under this purview, speech once again shifts under the domain of humans and is further proof of their exceptionalism.

When the bestiaries are read through the lens of species adjacency we find not the symbolic or emblematic animal, but the very real species that the Early Moderns interacted with. By looking back through the natural history encyclopedias of the 16th and early 17th centuries, we see a complex relationship which makes an effort to understand animal language,
communication, and emotion without deeming those beings as anthropomorphized. Rather it destabilizes the human identity by totalizing ‘human’ abilities. Animals are able to become more ‘human’ just as much as humans can descend into animalism; however, the connotations of these abilities are not always reliant upon a human reference point. For instance, Franzius’ ass creates his own signs, the bear creates its own art, and the lion writes its own tracks and discovers its own identity. It suggests that what was previously thought to be inherent only in the human is actually a part of a universal existence, thereby creating an entirely different meaning of what it means to be human. Browne says in his later bestiary “Thus we are men, and we know not how” (Browne 43) highlighting the post-Cartesian desire for a human-animal divide. The Early Modern bestiaries appear to revel in the state of not being quite human or animal; accepting the liminal space the human-animal relationship offered. Through the demonstrations of universal abilities in the bestiaries, we find the real animals and the real complications they created for the boundaries of the humans.
CHAPTER TWO: SPECIES ADJACENCY ON THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE

In the third edition of the *Norton Shakespeare*, Stephen Greenblatt borrows from Blaise Pascal—a seventeenth-century French philosopher—to ask “how secure is the borderline… that divides daylight reality from the illusion of dreams?” (1037). He uses this question to frame a canonical reading of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, suggesting that it is a play of unsettled boundaries between what Harold Bloom terms the green and real worlds, waking and sleep, illusion and reality, and Nature and humans. The constant reminder of unsettled boundaries is fitting for a play which features four groups of characters and four plots stemming from numerous classical and contemporary sources. The play deftly weaves together opposing elements and blurs the distinct lines which scholars have insisted upon. The play creates slippages among the divisions—as evidenced by Bottom’s physical transformation in Act Three—only to, as Greenblatt insists, assert the need for these boundaries. Through the lens of species adjacency, I will explore how the human-animal divide is more than just fluid, but consistently destabilized by these unsettled boundaries. This thesis thus argues that *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* questions what it means to be human through the complicated relationships with the nonhuman characters, animals on stage, both in costume and transformed, and the destabilized boundaries of the play.

Eco-critical discourse on Shakespeare has increased consistently over the past decade and within this field there has been a renewed effort to decenter the human and uncover representations of human-animal relationships from the past. Ecocriticism is a field that “considers the relationship between the humans and nonhumans… and early ecocriticism looked to texts that might recuperate a fractured intimacy between humans and nonhumans” (Munroe
461). Bruce Boehrer’s book enters into this discourse with his book *Animal Characters: Nonhuman Beings in Early Modern Literature*. He theorizes that “the problem of literary character may best be understood from the standpoint of animal studies, as an instance of broader philosophical and scientific problems in theorizing the human-animal divide” (3). Boehrer frequently frames his introduction around the playwright by stating that “Shakespeare and his contemporaries inherit a crisis of distinctions that expresses itself through fixation on the human-animal relationship” (10). Boehrer suggests that this crisis appears in the early modern presentation of nonhuman characters through the appropriation of human attributes. He looks at the way the role of horses, parrots, cats, turkeys and sheep have been represented, defined, and developed as characters which tell the modern reader about human-animal relationships of the past. He attempts to reconcile how real animals become literary figures by turning them into metaphors or anthropomorphizing them.

In Boehrer’s later book, *Shakespeare Among Animals*, he argues that *Midsummer* is a play thoroughly about bestiality, and despite the efforts taken to police the human border that process actually leads to its corruption. Boehrer theorizes that within the play “human nature is in constant danger of corruption from the bestial and/or female other, and that it therefore must be continuously and rigorously policed” and yet only through these acts of policing does bestiality emerge (44). Boehrer implements a similar methodology to Stephen Greenblatt’s containment/subversion argument from his foundational New Historicist essay “Invisible Bullets.” This is most clearly seen through his commentary on Oberon creating the bestial relationship between Bottom and Titania. In Oberon’s attempt to return to a traditional domestic hierarchy he conspires with Puck to have Titania fall in love with a monster. Boehrer suggests that the perverse relationship that occurs between Titania and Bottom arises out of Oberon’s
desire to enforce domestic sovereignty. Boehrer also emphasizes that all romantic couplings within the play have bestial undertones as lover’s describe themselves as dogs, horses, and serpents repeatedly. He suggests that *Midsummer* “constructs its various marital unions as analogues to (or extensions of, or coincident with) the sexual conjunction of people and animals” in order to transgress the established domestic order (48). Boehrer uses this to extend his argument and suggest that the play uses male/female conflict to gesture toward “a broader conflict between the governing assumptions of absolute and relative anthropocentrism” (43). It is at the border of anthropocentrism that Boehrer’s and my readings collide. While I suggest that it questions the human identity, I do not understand the play as anthropocentric. When read through the lens of species adjacency the play promotes a fluid understanding of the human-animal divide, which also extends to the nonhuman faeries. *Midsummer* is thoroughly bestial; however, I suggest that there is less policing at the human borders because the nonhuman characters are not presented as anthropomorphic caricatures nor do they assume human abilities.

Erica Fudge argues that in “current Shakespeare studies… the study of animals… is still, inevitably, merely a means to further understanding the plays rather than further understanding the animals” (Fudge “Renaissance Beasts” 7). Why can’t it do both? Shakespeare undoubtedly interacted with animals in London, as Laurie Shannon notes humans and animals frequently occupied the same space. The Globe Theatre competed with the bear-baiting arena, located only a few blocks away, for crowds and money. Some critics contend that a real bear was used during the famous “Exit...Pursued by Bear” moment in *A Winter’s Tale*. These are just some suggestions highlighting the fact that humans and animals were not isolated from each other, and the relationships between them in the real world could find their way onto the stage.
Ann Bach uses an eco-linguistic approach in her essay “The Animal Continuum in A Midsummer Night's Dream” to argue that the play does not create a ‘human’ or ‘animal’ category for its characters. Rather, Midsummer “envisions a world with an animal continuum, a world in which a distinction between mortals such as a lion and crow might be as significant a distinction between...aristocratic patriarchs and ploughmen” (124). Bach suggests a similar claim that there is no human-animal divide, nor a “singular human nature,” stating that the “play displays particular kinds of animals, both human and nonhuman” (123-124). However, her reading locates the fluidity of the continuum in the working class, most specifically the rude mechanicals, noting they are animalized to further emphasize the aristocratic distinctions in the play. Bach suggests that characters like Theseus use their speech to impose connections between the mechanicals and the nonhuman animal by mockingly calling Snug a ‘gentle beast’ (5.1.222) and the group ‘noble beasts’ (5.1.213). This ironically and purposefully calls the audience's attention to the characters’ lack of status in comparison to Theseus’ nobility. Bach highlights a similar occurrence with Titania’s speech, when she informs Oberon of the impact their dispute had on the agricultural world. Titania “does not differentiate categorically between ox and ploughman; both are embodied workers, and each has an equal relationship to his labour’s results” (125). The connections between the nonhuman animal and the worker as a nonhuman animal are interesting and suggest a lack of human-animal divide between the animal sub-groups. However, Bach’s hierarchical readings note that the aristocracy never experience the same fluidity nor become a nonhuman animal, which contradicts some of her claims that she finds no divide present. Furthermore, while her article suggests she will explore the animal continuum, the nonhuman faeries remain largely unexplored in her work: Titania is only mentioned twice, and Oberon and Puck receive a similar treatment. My thesis extends her
argument and establishes the nonhuman faeries as a significant destabilizing factor in the human-animal divide. I also argue that Midsummer presents various species collapsing physical and linguistic boundaries in order to question what it means to be human.

In The Accommodated Animal Laurie Shannon suggests that Midsummer troubles the idea of human exceptionalism through the consistent display of insufficient human senses, particularly the inability to see clearly at night. When the human characters enter into the fairy-dominated world, their weaker senses make them more susceptible to be ruled; Bottom is transformed, the lovers are placed under spells, and even Theseus claims that human reason fails at night suggesting “how easy is a bush supposed a bear” (5.1.21-22). Shannon proposes that the human characters lack the senses and judgement to survive in the natural world which inverts the relationship of sovereignty between the fairies, animals, and the humans. Shannon notes in an earlier section of her book that the human-animal relationship is layered in the political discourse of tyranny, dominion, and subjugation. Shannon observes that Bottom’s line “a part to tear a cat in” (1.2.24-25) emphasizes the tyranny imposed on animals through the violent act of ripping apart an animal with bare hands. Shannon’s short reading of the play helps to orient my argument in questioning the boundaries of human exceptionalism and identity.

The introduction of the play’s nonhuman characters reveals that they have significant impact on the world of the humans, exemplifying both the discord in the play and the collapsing of boundaries between the two worlds. The nonhuman sovereigns, Titania and Oberon, have been feuding since the beginning of midsummer over a stolen child and the issue of rightful ownership. In her speech to Oberon, Titania notes that their disagreements have transformed the human world; “the winds, piping to us in vain,/ As in revenge have sucked up from the sea/ Contagious fogs which falling in the land,/ Hath every pelting river made so proud/ That they

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have overborne their continents” (2.1.88-92). The lines suggest that natural elements have reason behind their discordant actions, and that the actions are motivated by spite. While ‘piping’ refers to the playing of a woodwind instrument, contextually it can also be an articulation of the wind’s language. The nonhuman sovereigns do not heed the sounds of the wind and so revenge is taken in the form of altering the human landscape. The representation of language, emotion, and reason in the wind indicates early on that these abilities are not specific to the human.

While these lines can be seen as a depiction of the pathetic fallacy—where the human projects emotions onto non-sentient nature—Titania’s consistent referral to natural elements as reasonable beings disrupts such a reading. Moreover, the elements described are responding to the nonhuman characters rather than being a reflection of the fairies’ emotions as the literary device would suggest. Titania continues on to discuss the moon in the same fashion as wind: “the governess of the floods,/ Pale in her anger, washes all the air/ That rheumatic diseases do abound” (2.1.103-105). The use of the word ‘governess’ in this passage places the moon in a political realm as it denotes the ruling position of a female figure over “a place, institution, or group of people” (OED). While Queen Titania and the moon can be viewed as parallel figures, the scene suggests that the moon is a separate figure responding to Titania and Oberon.

The moon’s authoritative position in the preceding passage similarly shows that sentient nature impacts and rules over both the nonhuman world and the human world. Gail Kern Paster notes in her edition of the play that the “wet springs and cold summers were part of the general worsening of the European climate in the sixteenth century” (1999 267). It has also been noted that this dramatic climate shift in the 1590s decimated landscapes and animal populations throughout the region. Although Titania claims ownership over nature’s “progeny of evils” (2.1.115) by stating that she and Oberon are the “parents and original” (2.1.117), her words do
not negate the fact that a ruling entity exists over both worlds. This suggests that all living creations exist under the same ruler, which can be depicted in a similar fashion to the Great Chain of Being. While the traditional image of the chain would have either God or Queen Elizabeth at the head, this depiction places Nature as the governess of all. This scene between Oberon and Titania further complicates our notion of the separation between nonhumans and humans, as we would expect the subspecies of humans to claim sovereignty over their nonhuman counterparts. However, the language of the scene shows that humans are merely impacted by both nature and the fairies and are not a reciprocal part of the discourse. The inversion of the hierarchy presents a fluidity between species which heretofore has not been discussed. It destabilizes the traditional notion of human exceptionalism and forces us to question what it means for a human to be ruled by the nonhuman.

The issue of the inverted hierarchy between the nonhuman entities and the humans is further complicated by both King Theseus’s presence in the forest and the fairies’ presence in Athens. In the beginning of Act 4 Theseus enters into what is perceived as the fairies’ realm with the perception that the land is strictly under his domain. He commands someone to find the “forester” (4.1.102) as he is ready to begin both his hunt and the celebration of May Day. By entering the forest with his horns and train, King Theseus’ actions suggest that this particular area was a crown forest, or a land specifically retained for a ruler’s right to hunt. While King Theseus appears to stabilize the boundaries between the nonhuman and human rulers by asserting the land as his, the closing of the play subverts that view once again. Upon the ending of the play-within-a-play scene, Theseus commands that the characters depart and uses a rhyming couplet, “A fortnight hold we this solemnity/ In nightly revels new jollity” (5.1.355-356). A rhyming couplet typically signals the close of the play, yet the fairies soon take
command of the stage. It is not the humans who are in control, and the fairies appearance in Athens asserts their power and control over the human world. Titania and Oberon instruct their underlings to “bless this place” (5.1.386) multiple times, and Robin tells the audience, “To the best bride-bed will we./ Which by us shall blessed be” (5.1.390-391). The fairies are responsible for the blessed marriage between Theseus and Hippolyta and ensure that order has returned to the human world. These acts resolve the first plot of the play, Hippolyta’s and Theseus’ upcoming marriage, and signal to the audience that the human world is under the domain of the nonhumans. While Theseus claims sovereignty over the land the fairies occupy, it is only the nonhumans who are shown to actively impact and assert power over the humans and their land, further showing the inverted hierarchy of species within the play.

A thorough understanding of the subverted hierarchy in the play highlights a new reading of the work itself and its complication of human and animal boundaries. The nonhuman characters are not quite animal and not quite human, but appear to occupy a liminal space between the two through their ability to communicate to all sentient beings and appearance. Robin addresses their ability to transform into an animal visage from their somewhat human appearance in Act 3 scene 1 when he states “Sometime a horse I’ll be, sometime a hound, a hog, a headless bear” (3.1.95-96). The trickster’s comment highlights the changing nature of the nonhuman’s body and shows how he can become any species when desired. Yet, these liminal creatures are seen ruling over humans and animals alike. The fairies control various characters through magic--be it transformation or the love potion--and early on in Act 2 scene 1 Oberon plans to make Titania fall in love with either a “lion, bear, or wolf, or bull./ On meddling monkey or on a busy ape” (2.1.180-181). While that particular act of magic is fashioned against Titania—another nonhuman character—it indicates that Oberon sees his power as stretching over animals
as well. The nonhumans’ fluid position between the species of human and animal, showcases that power comes from embracing species adjacency and the disruption of the human/animal divide. Moreover, throughout the progression of the play, characters are shown to represent a similar destabilization of species lines, and through that process *Midsummer* confronts the notions of human exceptionalism and superiority, offering an embrace of species adjacency.

An exploration of the liminal space between species, and the characters who occupy that place is offered upon Shakespeare’s introduction of the mechanicals, the group chosen to perform a play for the royal court. The characters’ names have often been noted for their connection to their trade: Quince derives from quoins, a carpenter’s tool; Snug, according to the Norton Shakespeare, refers to the quality of wood that uses joiners or fasteners; Bottom refers to the Ass he is and later will become, while also serving as a technical name in the process of weaving; Flute the bellows-mender suggests a connection to the objects he mended; Snout connects to the kettles a tinker would repair; and Starveling, according to the Norton Shakespeare, refers to the fact that tailors were thin. There is no disputing the connection between the tradesmen’s’ names and their trade; however, apart from Bottom, other etymological readings remain unexamined by editors of Shakespeare’s work. When their names are reexamined through the OED, many animal and natural connotations appear. I do not want to suggest that these existing definitions are incorrect, but rather through the editorial process the liminality of these characters has become marginalized.

By presenting new etymological understandings of the mechanicals, we can see the them as not just tradesmen belonging to the city world, but also belonging to the natural or green world that they sometimes occupy. Quince doubly refers to a yellow pear shaped fruit from the *Cydonia oblonga* tree (OED). Snout is “The projecting part of the head of an animal, which
includes the nose and mouth” (OED). The name Flute refers to the popular woodwind instrument which had a similarly popular name in England, the recorder. The change in names first occurred in 1383 as a reference to an instrument Henry Bolingbroke, later King Henry IV, had purchased. The interchangeability of the two names for the instrument is important to note as it stemmed from the verb “to record” which was largely used in connection to songbirds (OED). The Early Modern audience would have known the link between the flute and the recorder as well as the implied relationship to birds. Snug shows a connection between species as it refers to an action performed by either animals or humans (OED). While the etymology of the name might not reveal much at first glance, we must consider the part he plays in the forthcoming masque—the lion. His name, which I previously noted referenced the joining of two pieces of wood, now serves to join an animal and a human and present them as a cohesive unit on the stage. Finally, Starveling bears a phonetic resemblance to starling, a European songbird. In fact, his first name Robin similarly implies a connection to a bird. These additional meanings complicate the reading of the mechanicals as representatives of the city and the working class. Undoubtedly, the characters have a strong connection to the “human” world; however, they have similarly strong ties to the natural world, which situates the characters in the liminal space between the two worlds.

As the scene between the mechanicals progresses the need for species adjacency on stage is brought to our attention by Bottom. Bottom fears the audience will think he died when Pyramus is slain, and that panic will ensue if a lion is thought to be on stage. This discussion of ladies fainting if they were to see a lion on stage is taken as a comical reference to the christening of King James’ son, Henry. Evidently, there was a parade set for after the event and Henry would be placed in a chariot pulled by a tamed lion. For fear of frightening the crowd the
lion was replaced by a “blackamoor” (Fowler 488)— some texts indicate it was a man of African descent while others claim he was Turkish. This small note in history reveals to the modern reader how interchangeable a person and an animal were. Of course, it similarly reveals a racial tension present in their society, as the historical accounts are quick to mention that it changed from a fantastic animal to a fantastic foreigner. Fowler, the author of the account, commented on the ornate ceremony and apparel donned by the charioteer, stating he was “greatly attired, [and] his traces were great chains of gold” (Fowler 488). He also noted that it appeared the man pulled the chariot— which was 12 feet long and 7 feet wide— by himself with a Herculean strength, but it was later revealed that it was constructed with hidden assistance underneath. The spectacle of the lion was therefore replaced with an equal spectacle of a man. The fluidity of species and corruption of the boundary between humans and animals has a negative connotation through this story as it is racially prompted. Bottom’s initial desire for transparency between the species lines is both comical and historical; yet, it also reveals the theatre’s acknowledgment of, and a need for, a hinged adjacency between animal and human identity.

The mechanicals embrace the need for species adjacency through the creation of the lion’s prologue and restrictions on the physical presentation of the lion. In the scene, Bottom not only states that a speech must be written to assure the ladies, but also that Snug should be named, and that “half his face must be seen through the lion’s neck” (3.3.32-33). In my earlier chapter, I noted how the overlapped boundaries of intermixed species, such as sphinxes, complicated the boundaries of species identity. A similar intermingling occurs as Bottom calls for the presentation of two species to occupy the same physical space. Even though Snug is able to be identified through the costume, the placement within the neck of the lion further complicates the human-animal boundary. Bottom continues on to say that “he himself”—meaning Snug— “must
speak through” the lion’s neck (3.1.33-34). The word choice “through” evokes the image of the human physically underneath the lion, which seemingly contradicts the clear-cut binaries and hierarchies’ scholars place onto both the text and the time period. By privileging the position and appearance of the lion over the human, the text suggests a different view on species relationships. By having the human speak “through” the lion, the animal becomes the conduit for human speech.

An initial impulse for the critic is to read the introduction of Snug and the lion as a personified or anthropomorphic creature. Mathilde La Cassagnère suggests that the appearance of Snug as the lion is “a prophecy of the ‘Cartesian segregation of man and beast’ (La Cassagnère); yet, a close and careful reading of the text also allows for other suggestions. The treatment of the lion in Quince’s prologue and opening remarks signals that adjacency is at work on the stage, not just personification. Quince introduces the lion by saying;

This grisley beast, (which Lyon hight by name)

The trusty Thisbe, coming first by night,

Did scare away or rather did affright

And as she fled, her mantle she did fall.

Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain…

For all the rest

Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain

At large discourse” (5.1.138-150).

The active agent of the prologue is the lion and not the actor playing it; the lion’s appearance is not the medium through which Snug performs, but rather the lion is the performer of all his actions. The lion’s actions are focused on the mouth and its capabilities, first through its ability
to debase Thisbe’s coat then through its ability to speak. While enumerating the forthcoming prologues, Quince lists three things typically excluded from having speech. However, he places them in conversation with the two human lovers and gives no indication of a metaphor or simile. The lion here does not speak like a human, but is in a natural discourse or dialogue with them. This significant wording signals to us that animal language is a part of species adjacency, meaning that speech was an attribute all beings shared and participated in. To call this beast an anthropomorphic or personified being overlooks the fact that the lion acts in accordance with its own nature. The lion described on stage is a lion, not a segregated beast nor an animal who needs a human to act.

The representation of an animal on stage conjures the image of another popular type animal performance altogether. The Globe Theatre was located a few blocks from the bear baiting arenas used for entertainment. The sport—which used a variety of animals including apes, dogs, horses, lions, and bears—was conducted like a stage-play with specific cues, choreography, and actors. The animals were treated like famous tragedians and given names and a plot. The lion enters the stage from the cue “Here come two noble beasts in, a man and a lion,” given to us by Theseus (5.1.212-213), and the stage notes also indicate that the other man is Starveling, or Moonlight, accompanied by a lantern, thornbush, and a dog. While the dog is not mentioned by Theseus, Quince notes his presence in the prologue by saying “the man with lantern, dog, and bush of thorn/ Presenteth Moonlight” (5.1.134-135). This indicates that a dog is occupying space on the stage and acting alongside a lion. The acceptance of these two species on the stage evokes the image of the staged plays at the bear baiting arena where lions and dogs often acted against one another. To include a lion and a dog in this scene is to play into the notion that animals themselves were actors and these were just new roles for them to embody.
Snug’s prologue appears to contradict the acceptance of speaking animals in this play as it intends to inform the metatheatrical audience that a lion is not actually on stage. The audience has at this point seen humans acting and speaking like an ass, as well as an ass speaking. As a strong precedent for talking animals already exists within the play, the audience can seamlessly suspend disbelief and accept the presence of a talking lion. However, thanks to textual clues from both the Quarto published in 1600 and the Folio published in 1623, a new understanding of the text emerges. In both versions of the play the lines spoken by Snug as the lion are attributed to the Lyon, as though it were its own character in the dramatis personae and not part of a known and intentional character doubling on stage. Modern editions, such as the Norton editions by Greenblatt, edit this information and label the lines as “Snug [as lion]” for clarity for the modern audience. However, with the initial publishing we gain insight on the performative lion.

The prologue begins with an unclear understanding as to whether Snug or the lion is speaking;

You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,
May now perchance both quake and tremble here,
When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.
Then know that I as Snug the joiner, am
A lion-fell, nor else no lion's dam;
For, if I should as lion come in strife
Into this place, 'twere pity on my life. (5.1.214-221)

As the lines begin to unfold the first four provide no indication that Snug is speaking through the lion to the audience. Comparatively, when Snout performs the other prologue he announces his
presence and character within the first two lines, “That I, one Snout by name, present a wall” 
(5.1.155). Additionally, when he does introduce himself on the fifth line he uses the phrase “I as 
Snug” as though to suggest Snug is another role being performed.

The first four lines present themselves then as an outlier from the other character 
introductions, leaving the impression that it is the lion speaking directly to the women in the 
playhouse using its vile mouth. Moreover, the content of the first lines are not intended to 
comfort the women, but address their potential anxiety or fear brought about by a lion’s 
presence. The beginning part of the speech uses emotive language—‘fear,’ ‘monstrous,’ 
‘creeps,’ ‘quake,’ ‘tremble,’ ‘rough,’ ‘rage,’ and ‘roar’—drastically juxtaposing all other 
prologues which use pleasant language in order “not to offend” (5.1.109) the audience. Quince 
has previously called the audience’s attention to the lion’s ‘vile’ and ‘bloody mouth,’ and the 
language used in this section is more reflective of the animal than the other human speakers.

The prologue draws the audience’s attention to the fact that they are watching a play; 
they are cautioned against letting their minds blur the distinction between reality and imagination 
for fear that the ensuing performance will startle or disturb them. The mechanicals effectively 
secure the borderline “that divides daylight reality from the illusion of dreams” (Greenblatt 
1037) and create the illusion of strict divisions between worlds. Critics, such as Greenblatt, refer 
to this act in particular when establishing a reading of the play steeped in necessary boundaries. 
Yet, such understandings of Midsummer do not take into account that the prologues and ensuing 
production of Pyramus and Thisbe are a parody, and not representative of normal theatrical 
productions. The actual audience knows this and have been privy to the mechanicals’ 
conversations regarding their need for intervention in the plot. Thus what occurs here is not a
mimetic function of the theatre that discounts and disillusionment adjacency on the stage, but a clever inversion of such aspects.

Shakespeare similarly accounts for these boundaries through the transformation of Bottom from a human acting like an ass to a human with a physical ass’s head. Though this change acts as a pun on Bottom’s name, as previously mentioned, it also is an embrace of religious symbolism. The first occurs through the placement of the ass above the human body. Bottom’s transformation echoes his earlier statements regarding the hinged adjacency needed for Snout and the lion with one key difference. Whereas Snout needed his face to be present through the lion’s neck, Bottom’s head is obscured by the ass’s, as evidenced by the Folio’s stage direction, “Enter...BOTTOM with the ass head on” (3.1) (Italics from the text). Early modern religion and philosophy espoused the belief that certain body parts were closer to God than others. Specifically, it was thought that the head was the closest, and as you travelled down your body you were further away from Him. By having Bottom appear with an ass head, Shakespeare not only inverts the appearance of a typical half-breed—such as a Centaur or Sphynx which have animal bodies and human faces—but also puts the animal closest to God. Much like the inverted hierarchy between the nonhumans and humans, this signals that when existing in the liminal space between species, a character gains power or an advantage.

The second religious undertone comes from an allusion to the biblical tale of Balaam’s ass. As the story goes, Balaam the Prophet is riding his donkey to assist Balak in Moab, but God is angry that Balaam is going and sends an angel to stop his path. Initially, only the ass can see the angel in the path and tries to stop, but is punished greatly by Balaam who thinks his ass is being stubborn. The angel gives the ass the ability to communicate which results in a conversation between the two parties, and Balaam finally seeing the angel. The audience would
draw the connections during Bottom’s transformation as the donkey had a rich religious history. While this transformation also has parallels in *The Golden Ass*, and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* the average audience members “most of its women, many of its lower class men—were virtually untouched by classical education” (Paster 275-276). As Bottom transformed before their eyes the audience would recall the biblical history of speaking ass and project that knowledge onto the creature before them. Once we understand how the religious undertones forged a connection to the viewer, we can see how Bottom’s transformative narrative places him closer to God than his previous self.

The revelation that Bottom’s species adjacency grants him biblical knowledge is strengthened by carefully reading his monologue “Bottom’s Dream.” Scholars have often noted that this soliloquy at the close of Act 4 is riddled with biblical references and its beautiful prose marks a sharp contrast to his earlier speeches. Kurt Schreyer, for instance, has previously noted the duality in Bottom’s transformation by saying the translation was “both a mechanical as well as a linguistic practice” (Schreyer 2). This change in speech is in direct correspondence with his time in the fairy world and his time spent as part ass. In the speech, Bottom states “the eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen” (4.2.205) which inverts a line of Scripture. I want to suggest the list of inversions Bottom provides in this passage also destabilize the species boundary. By stating what the human head cannot do, directly after having the head of an ass, Bottom implies that only the transformed and the animal can truly understand his dream/experience.

As Bottom finds himself physically translated into part animal, his inability to speak directly to his fellow mechanicals highlights the fact that he his language has also changed. Snout vocalizes the shift in appearances and asks “What do I see on thee?” (3.1.102). This
question once again draws attention to the doublings in appearance where the preposition “on” can refer to the animal’s presence as something in contact with Bottom, something layered over Bottom, or something supported by Bottom. However, unlike the neck which Snug could speak through Bottom’s ‘human’ vocal abilities appear to be in conflict with the ass body parts that now lie over him. Bottom responds to Snout’s question proclaiming “What do you see? You see an ass head of your own, do you?” (3.1.103-104) and the mechanicals run off again screaming in terror. Quince then comes back on stage to proclaim “Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee. Thou art translated” (3.1.105). The use of the word “translated” over synonyms like transformed or changed, indicates that not only has Bottom’s appearance been altered, but so have his speech and vocal abilities. The characters give no indication they can even understand him and this apparent lack of communication on stage initially reads as a shift away from the acceptance of universal language and a lack of human exceptionalism.

A conventional reading of this moment looks at the potential for a binary which privileges the human language over the animal’s language. However, while the characters do not consider themselves in conversation with one another, the framework of a play dictates that they are. For instance, Snout poses a question, Bottom responds, and Snout runs off stage. Snout responds to Bottom’s emittance of vocables, so while he cannot understand it, he still converses with Bottom. Furthermore, Quince’s use of the word “translated” acts as a paratextual cue to the audience signaling that the theatergoers can understand Bottom’s speech even if the characters in the scene cannot. The audience takes on a role in this act as the translator, or hinge, between animal and human language since they can understand both parties. Much like the metatheatrical moments in the fifth act, the audience has a different relationship with the species represented on the stage than the characters do. More so than being a practical function of the play, the
audience’s ability to understand Bottom’s new speech collapses the perceived boundaries of the stage.

Bottom’s translation in Act 3 scene 1 marks a syntactic difference between his human speech and his ass speech and gives the animal language an almost ethereal quality. His newfound access to a more poetic language allows Bottom to complicate species lines. The song itself heavily features birds and the varying aspects of language they produce, both for and with humans;

The ousel cock so black of hue,
With orange-tawny bill,
The throstle with his note so true,
The wren with little quill,—
The finch, the sparrow and the lark,
The plain-song cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark,
And dares not answer nay (120-128)

Throughout the piece, the imagery of writing and writing implements appear. First, there is “note” which on the surface references a musical note. However, a note is also a written text often passed between two or more persons. The song then makes reference to a “quill” which is a writing instrument made from the feather of a bird. One could say birds, and therefore animals, are instrumental to the writing process. The word “note” appears again, yet this time it is in conjunction with mankind and that they, meaning men, “mark” it--“mark” of course doubles as both an understanding of what is said, and another reference to the act of writing. The song ends with humans speaking back to the birds saying that they cannot answer “nay” signifying that
communication occurs across all species and is not a solely human aspect. The birds of the song comprise the tools integral in human communication which showcase a dissolution of linguistic boundaries as the humans need the animals to communicate.

Even while Bottom cannot participate in discourse with his fellow mechanicals, his song acknowledges the ability of species to communicate without boundaries or even a collapse of boundaries. Here language is a universal element and his song represents a bittersweet example of the kind of communication in which he wishes to engage. Descartes intervenes in 1637 and dictates that birds parrot human speech and asserts that they neither understand human language nor have one of their own. He continues on to say that “we ought not to confound speech with the natural movements which indicate the passions, and can be imitated by machines as well as manifested by animals; nor must it be thought with certain of the ancients, that the brutes speak, although we do not understand their language” (Descartes 23). The content in Bottom’s song—and for that matter, Bottom himself and the speech of the lion—show a drastically different view on animal language and its ability to cross species. The language presented in the song and Bottom’s own language reinforce the shared universal experience from the early modern period. The talking animals both seen and discussed on stage are not anthropomorphized in the way our modern perspective wants to read them.

By not seeing these animals as gaining a human quality, but having a similar capacity for language, we are forced to question what it means to be human and what it means to be an animal. This question is increasingly important because not only are there humans and animals on stage, but there is also the nonhuman presence with the faeries. Bottom’s transformation in Act 3 scene 1 is caused by the fairy Robin Goodfellow, or as he is otherwise called, Puck. After changing Bottom, Robin states that he intends to continuously frighten the group and will
sometimes be a “horse” or a “hound...A hog, a headless bear” and will create corresponding animal language by neighing, barking, roaring and grunting (3.1.96-97). Robin intends to embody a mix of domestic, performative, and wild animals. This represents a new dynamic that allows for the containment of different animals in a body without being mediated by a human. What does it mean that the nonhuman also participates in such a fluidity between species? Prior to Puck’s voluntary animal adaptations only the low-born mechanicals were shown to complicate the human-animal boundaries. The inclusion of the Puck as the liminal space between human and animal destabilizes the boundary between the two species.

The presence of the nonhuman plays a significant role in the interactions between Bottom and Titania when he has been transformed into an ass. Titania has been placed under an enchantment by Oberon and Puck to fall in love with the first being she sees, which Puck conspires to make the transformed Bottom. Upon hearing him sing, she wakes up and asks him to sing to her again stating that she loves him. Bottom responds that she “should have little reason for that. And yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together nowadays” (3.1.126-127). His commentary on her declarations of love returns us momentarily to the argument for the reasonable ass head. Of course, Bottom has never been the reasonable character and his turn as the animal is beginning to create an inversion. This is further implied through his lack of lines in his interactions with the nonhuman Titania. Over the course of the scene he speaks five times, predominantly in 2-4 lines, while Titania and her fairies make up the rest of the 23 lines. Titania also has two large speeches of 11 lines within this scene. This starkly contrasts Bottom’s scenes with the mechanicals where he interrupted, expounded, and monologued his way through the interactions. The enumerating of spoken lines from this passage highlights that there is a change to the pattern of his behavior.
More than just altering his nature and speaking less, the content of what Bottom says during his interaction with Titania reflects a change in his own reasoning. Whereas Bottom previously advised Quince to give him all of the acting parts as he could do them perfectly, in his conversation with Titania he appears more subdued and willing to admit faults. When Titania, while blinded by the love potion, states that Bottom is as wise as he is beautiful he responds “Not so neither; but if I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn” (3.1.132-133). Rather than boasting about himself, as he has done repeatedly, he admits to neither being beautiful nor witty. While occupying the liminal space between species, Bottom reveals his own humility and humanity, something he never did prior to his transformation. While we can read Bottom’s transformation purely as a trick against Titania and an example of how a human can descend into animalism through his or her foolish behavior, when we read his inverted behavior there is another suggestion; the animal exceeds the human.

As Puck returns Bottom to his human body in Act 4 scene 1, the audience is once again asked to embrace the spectacle and believe that magic is taking place to retranslate Bottom. In both the Quarto and Folio no stage directions are given to clarify what happens on stage; yet, most modern editions insert a direction of their own preceding Robin’s line indicating that he removes it on stage. Schreyer suggests that “the on-stage removal of the headgear (with Puck carrying it off in his hands or on his own head) suggests that the text of Dream is trying to call our attention to its artificiality” (Schreyer 19). However, other than the text saying that Bottom lies sleeping there are no indicators as to what portion of his body is visible to the audience when the head is removed. I am likewise reluctant to read Robin’s on-stage magic as anything other than the theatrical embrace of the spectacle. Inserting this modern stage direction wraps things up for the modern audience, but the revelation that the audience witnessed a stage trick and not
magic appears to contradict the understanding of Robin’s role throughout the play. Robin concludes the play with an epilogue that once again blurs the lines between sleeping and waking, suggesting to the audience that if it was offended by the play, they should take comfort in it being nothing but a dream. Considering he was the character magically pulling others in and out of sleep, the epilogue makes the audience wonder if it was similarly under his spell, particularly because his words release the audience from its dream-like state. To break from this character’s intentions and read Bottom’s re-transformation as a showing of prop-work, is to disregard the magic and dream-like themes that permeate the stage. Moreover, it conflates the parodic and theatrical human-lion with the real human-ass.

_A Midsummer Night’s Dream_ not only unsettles perceived boundaries, but the minds of the audience and characters alike. The fluid nature of the play likewise causes debate amongst critics and directors as to whether they should ignore the dark undertones in favor of presenting it as a lighthearted comedy, or if it should dispense with the foolish behavior and present a more troubling play. While I do not intend to participate in the conversation about the play’s true genre, I find it important to note that the boundaries both within the play and surrounding it are often up for debate. In this acknowledgement I hope to offer the reading that _Midsummer_ is a play which intentionally creates and thrives in the liminal spaces that saturated the early modern mindset. This is clearly seen through the constant presence of animals and animal language on the stage. What it presents are not anthropomorphic caricatures of great beasts and creatures, but the assumption of a universal existence that occurred across all species.

_A Midsummer Night’s Dream_ intentionally troubles the idea of our preconceived notion of the human existence. We can see that language, reason, and feelings are not significantly attributed to humans. Bottom’s dream speech indicates that perhaps humans lack the capacity to
understand an animal’s perspective, not the other way around, and the fairies have magic that the humans cannot access. It appears that to be human is to lack something, and to embrace the dissolution of species boundaries is to gain something. Previous scholars, such as Laurie Shannon, have observed the inferior abilities of the human and understood these characters as being less than the nonhuman, steeping their reading of the play in the language of the binary human/other. While there are moments of this present, we should rather divert our attention to the liminal spaces brought about by species adjacency to see what is gained from this embrace: the liminal nonhuman fairies are given power and sovereignty; Bottom accepts his faults and gains, what we would call, humanity; the lion becomes an actor, is granted relief from his normal stage in the bear-baiting arena, and uses his new linguistic tools to assert his presence and power. *Midsummer* thus instructs the readers to embrace the corruption of boundaries of the human experience, as it is only when one becomes animal-adjacent that one can see what it means to be human.
CONCLUSION:  
EXIT, PURSUED BY BEAR

This thesis explores what it means to be human and animal in a Renaissance culture that did not fully embrace the notion that the two concepts were mutually exclusive. Rather a complicated relationship between the two beings emerges, which I have examined through the lens of species adjacency. The term--species adjacency--allows us to see the fluid dynamics between humans and animals, how they both participated in a universal existence rooted in language and reason. Once it is understood that there was an assumption that animals could speak, feel, and think we can see that the animal characters from this era were not anthropomorphic or personified creatures, but existed in their own right. It is not until the Cartesian split that literary devices like personification or pathetic fallacy truly emerge. Accounting for animals in such a fashion has long been the work of scholars such as Erica Fudge, Laurie Shannon, and Bruce Boehrer. While this is not the definitive list of animal scholars in the field, the aforementioned scholars have similarly noted the negative impact Descartes had on human-animal relationships; yet, many of their readings still rely on a post-Cartesian understanding of binarisms and anthropomorphism.

Both chapters presented in this thesis addressed a different genre in an effort to observe the range of thought which surrounded species adjacency. Chapter 1, which covered the bestiaries, discovered the basis for this theory routed in its scientific discourse. By establishing internal and external similarities between species, the text revealed the foundation for thinking that animals could speak, reason, and feel. This sharply contrasted with Cartesian bestiaries which sought to anatomize and differentiate the animal entirely. By combining scientific information with stories about the animals, Topsell and Franzius ground animal language as fact,
and not fiction. Through these readings we can see how anthropomorphism, in contrast, is fiction, and not fact.

Chapter 2 explored species adjacency on the Elizabethan stage through a reading of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. In this chapter I located the argument for species adjacency through the inverted power dynamics, physically intermingled species on stage, and through the boundaries it collapsed. These observations lead us to question what it meant to be human at a time when the human/animal binary was corrupted. How do we define ourselves without an ‘other’ counterpart? While the humans of the play are often shown as lacking something—the ability to see through the dense forest, find their way home, or communicate with Nature—the animals also are shown to lack something. For instance, there is an apparent dog on stage during the play, though it is never addressed and the only animal to not speak. However, when the species intermingle and embrace the qualities of the each other they are shown to gain something such as knowledge, power, or insight into oneself. We can observe that the fairies have the most ruling power, Bottom is at his most poignant after his translation, and the mechanicals gain a connection to Nature through their names. *Midsummer* dissolves the binaries and instructs the readers to inhabit liminal spaces; it suggests that the human does not need the ‘other’ to define oneself, but rather suggests that the human becomes the ‘other.’

We traditionally think of ourselves as opposite to animals, and scholarship has highlighted that relationship significantly. By opening up to the possibility for fluidity on both sides of the species I hope to offer a new path for early modern Animal Studies that examines the destabilizing effect of the human-animal relationship. Species adjacency elevates animals to creators—like the sculpting bear or ‘actor’ animals from the arenas—which forces humans to compete with animals for jobs effectively destabilizing the job market; it can also collapse what
it means to be a human in this moment. By understanding that there was no firm division between species we can return to previously studied texts with new and renewed series of questions. If all species have this universal experience and capacity for feeling why are some used for consumption and others not? What does it mean to write literature, and can the writing animal participate in such culture? Were we ever human or have we always been an intermingled species? I offer these now, not in an attempt to answer them, but in a way to suggest how this field can move forward from here.
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