

Faculty of Design

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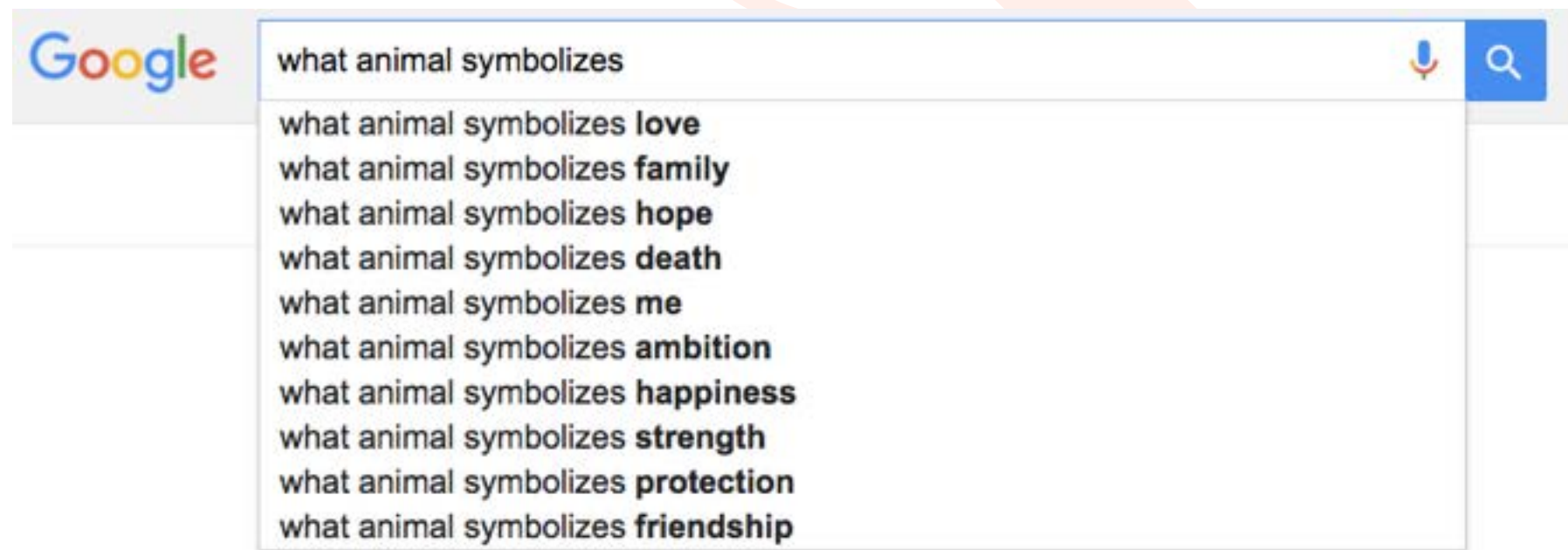
DRILL DOGUE

RE- PREFIXES TO THE ANIMAL

with special guest Alison Cooley, INTERPRETING ALONGSIDE KAPSULA

Men respond, animals react—so says Lacan, so says Derrida, so they say.

The formation of words into sentences into paragraphs, spoken aloud by you and me, establishes a distinction between us and them: human and nonhuman animals. We don't mean it, but these distinctions tend to emerge if we meant anything at all. And in the purview of the language, do we ever—can we ever—mean nothing at all?



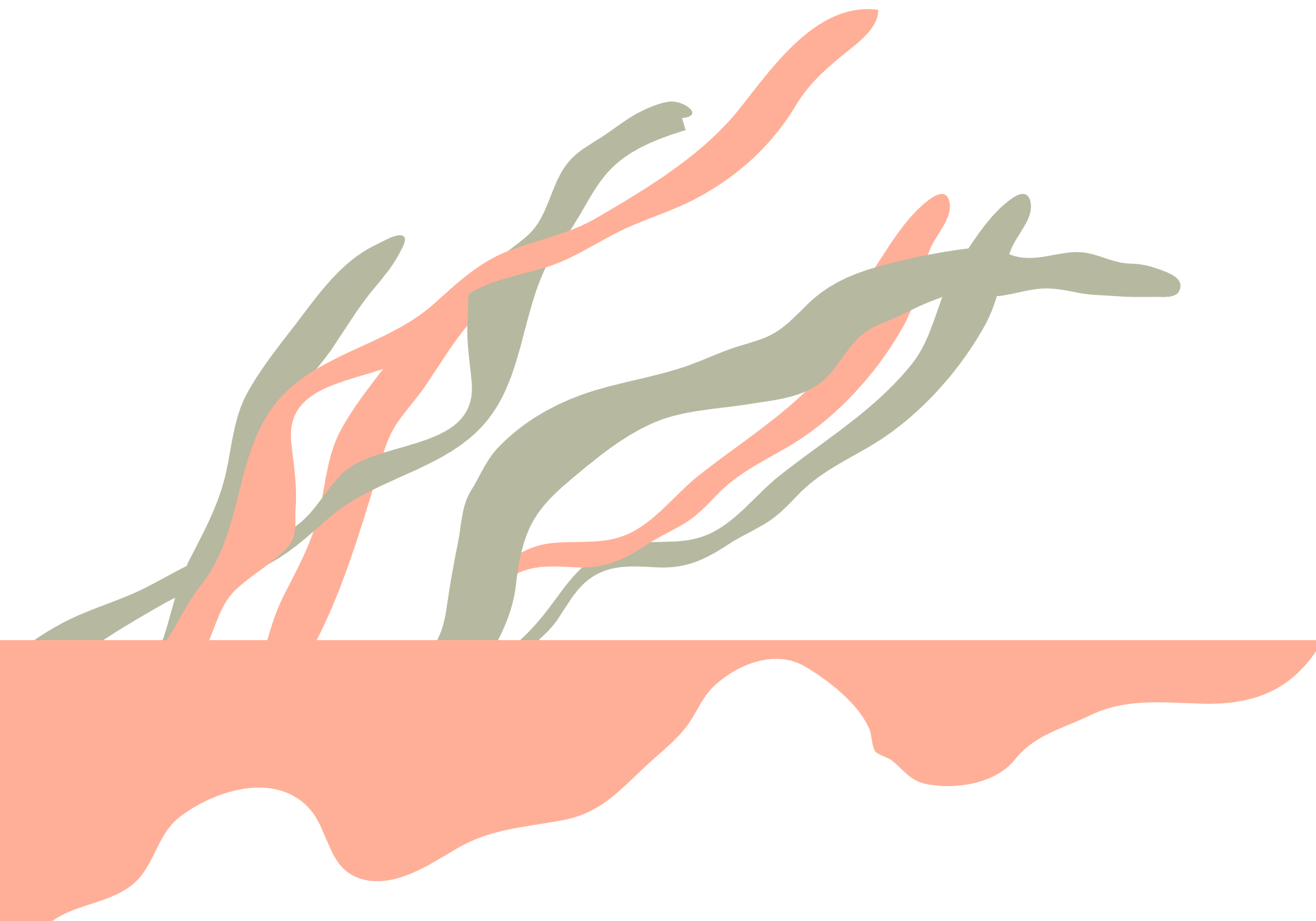
Let's talk about speech. Perhaps the clearest way to demarcate human and nonhuman communication, the development of speech at the unmemorable entry into the Symbolic stage clings to the skin, molds itself to the body, a sticky, permanent Saran Wrap

By the time we reach adulthood, everything is muffled. Our access to primal noises, those signifying something behavioural, something raw and unprocessed, slowly shuts down. In the

worst of cases, it's relegated to funny YouTube videos of animals that sound like humans. Try as I might, it isn't easy to reboot; which is to say the spoken word, in all its authority, can't be trusted. Thankfully, we're confident some of you share these "authority issues".

What about body language? Or, perhaps more accurately, modes of communication that employ different parts of the body, beyond the endlessly appealing mouth. Forms of bodily communication reveal our closeness with nonhuman animals, as we watch our own, familiar movements mirrored across other beings. When structured according to a coded system, such as in sign language, opportunities arise for cross-species communications.

Part of our ongoing problem as human species has exactly, everything to do with this perceived lack of awareness in other animals. Though we hold little awareness for ecological change, slight shifts in landscape, climate, and proximity to other life, we do get to boast an awareness of ourselves, of ourselves responding to environment—even if the input gets dramatically diluted to produce the output. But hey, who needs Earth Day when you've got wordplay?







COYOTE WALK

Jay White

Equipped with a backpack, tent, food, water, and a camouflage-print tarpaulin, I attempt to remain hidden from other people while walking and sleeping in a city for three consecutive days.

Coyote Walk has been performed twice in Vancouver on unceded Coast Salish territories, and once in Saskatoon, on Treaty 6 territory. Prior to each walk, I offer the public an opportunity to participate by distributing invi-tations around the city:

I would like to warmly invite you to take part in Coyote Walk as a tracker/photographer.

For up to three days, I will remain hidden as I walk and camp in and around the city. However, the walk ends prematurely if I am spotted by a human at close-range.

During the walk, I wear a tracking device which transmits my location at half-hour intervals.

You may access a website or smartphone app that will allow you to track me. You may take on the role of documenting my passage through photography and/or video.

As a tracker, you may also end the walk by getting too close. However, you are responsible for leaving me in peace. You should not attempt to end the walk pre-emptively, and should respect my privacy and not disturb me. I am putting my trust in you as fellow participants in the project.



Drawing lessons from the ways coyotes and other nonhuman urban animals remain unseen, I move mostly at night, then hide and remain sedentary during the day. To engage with the project, participant-trackers must also move through interstitial areas which are normally outside the awareness of the human urbanite: debris-choked property lines, undeveloped easements along streams and rivers, dense thickets in golf courses, and vacant lots. Participants are forced to confront barriers that delineate private property, and acknowledge the possibility that they might be intruding on other animals that dwell in the city alongside them.

Images captured during the walk rarely depict a human figure; occasionally, the long exposures capture a fur-tive and indiscernible form that defies identification. More often, the photographs index the entities that find themselves on the margins of urban spaces: dirty diapers, rusted cars, windblown plastic bags and other human-made detritus; an abundance of other animals and flora; and traces of fellow humans that inhabit these spaces.





From my perspective, the walks are a transformative journey and a form of deeply immersive experiential learning. More-than-human beings inevitably emerge to influence and affect the ways I understand the city. The lessons of coyotes, beavers, cedars and others are translated into stories and lessons that heighten my respect for their unknowable ways of being.

Coyote Walk reveals that the city is not only defined by physically differentiated spaces, but also by daily temporal shifts. Walking at night reveals that our territories overlap with other animals, who dominate places that we consider to be essentially human. Coyotes hunt through golf courses at night; beavers chase away trespassers that come too close to their homes along the rivers. The nocturnal city — and interstitial areas that lie hidden-in-plain-sight, beyond the perception of habituated urbanites — are where hierarchies of power are temporarily levelled, and where nonhuman beings assert their agencies by co-defining our shared habitat.

The next Coyote Walk will be held in Toronto and Scarborough, Ontario in the fall of 2016.



Jay White

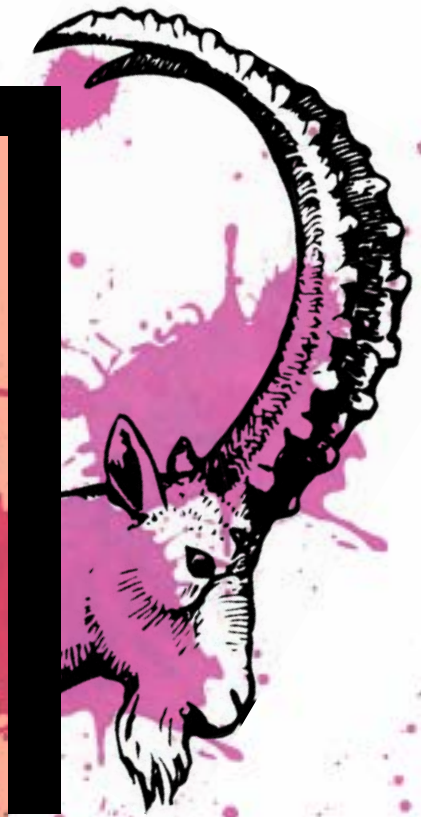
is an artist, animator and storyteller. His films have won various awards internationally, including Best Animated Short at the Worldwide Animation Festival (2010), and a longlist entry for a “Best Animated Short” Academy Award nomination. His work has exhibited at the Istanbul Design Biennale (2014), Charles H. Scott Gallery (2014), Yukon Arts Centre Gallery (2013), the National Arts Centre (2013) the University of Glasgow (2011), PuSH Festival Vancouver (2011), and ODD Gallery Dawson City (2008).

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Witchy Goatherd:

Speculative Proposals for

Feminist Goat Rituals



Prologue: Finding Nourishment Through Narcissistic Goat-Identification

The baby goat is my conceptual spirit animal: its frantic movements, its bewitching little body, its demonic eyes. Domesticated though they may be, the baby goats jump and leap and flip through the air on their own volition, responding aberrantly to their environments through movement and sound. I respond viscerally to their lively behaviour, their coltish movements, the rapid oscillation of their energy levels at unanticipated intervals. When placed next to a wary cat or a stoic dog, the goat is inclined to leap at the cat's body or jump on the dog's head. These actions aren't taken as seriously as other animals' might be: the dog remains in his reclined position, unaffected, while the cat walks away, mildly annoyed.

At first glance, my love of goats could be interpreted as one of fetishization, anthropocentric projection, inter-species co-optation, or naive cute-rendering—where cuteness becomes the “aestheticization of powerlessness” (Ngai 2011, 1). I am sure that my intents are more nuanced than this. As a human, I am bound by my anthropomorphic ontology, unsure of how to overcome these limits in my thoroughly subjective interpretations of goat behaviour. The goats

amuse me, yes; but the amusement comes from a profound sense of recognition. As a cisgendered woman, a “millennial,” a perpetual graduate student, an emerging artist, and a post-third wave feminist, my goat obsession can be quickly subsumed into the realm of commodifying impulse and predictable trend: just another white girl, consuming YouTube goat videos to ease the pain of economic precarity. And yet there is something else going on, something stranger, something empathetic.

The sonic plight of the goat is disturbing, ancient vibrations emanating from amusing forms. I lie on the grass in the park, holding my iPhone up to the sky as baby goats leap across its surface and shout like humans trapped in nonhuman animal bodies. Their shouting is unintelligible to me, a series of pre-Symbolic utterances that sound pained and Sisyphean, that make me laugh uncomfortably. Are they trying to tell me something? Their shouting is uncanny, sometimes resembling the frantic shouting of human men. What possesses them in this way? With distinctive voices, the goats range from baritone to countertenor, warbling and jerking like the hysterics of the 19th-century who performed for the camera. I turn over onto my front, my thighs pressing down into the grass as I look down towards my phone. “Goats Yelling Like Humans - Super Cut Compilation” plays on a loop as I lie there on my belly, vibrating with the thrill of identification.

Prior to the post-structuralist turn in the mid-20th-century, gender-based binary oppositions were often taken as a given, organizing Western thought according to unchecked patriarchal privileging. Women were associated with the body and its supposed irrationality, excess, and disorder while men were associated with the mind and its presumed rationality, moderation, and civility (Carson 125). Feminist artist-thinkers such as Anne Carson, who in “The Gender of Sound” unpacks these gendered oppositions alongside the history of sound, point out how this binary way of thinking has been engrained in patriarchal society, and how women’s fundamental association with the body and uncultivated matter has led to their abject and immoral status as hysterics and madwomen, witches and whores (Carson 1995, 120). Because of their supposedly inherent connection to the body—a connection that, according to the organizing logic of Cartesian dualism, was seen as mu-

tually exclusive from an engagement with the mind—women were considered essentially non-conceptual. The conceptual was the purview of men, and women, reduced to their bodies, continued to exist in the margins of cultural production—creating work and making noise that was perceived as unintelligible, unintelligent, hysterical, and narcissistic.

Carson elucidates the historical identification of women and other “others” (“catamites, eunuchs, androgynes,” and queers) as hysterics through an analysis of gendered sounds (Carson 1995, 120). Historically, Carson explains, women’s sounds have been associated with marginality, witchery, madness, savagery, the otherworldly, and bestiality (Carson 1995, 120). The transmuting of psychic events into somatic terms, hysteria exposes or expends that which “should be kept in” (Carson 1995, 121). The goat embodies a kind of hysteria, existing as a non-linear spurt of somatic and vocal leakages. Like the women that history describes, the goat can be heard as making *aischrologia* or ugly sounds rather than the “rationally articulated speech” of phallogocentrism; they are subsequently scapegoated or deemed abject by virtue of their threat to the (Symbolic) Order of Things. In this term “scapegoat,” the goat is always already abject, signifying the act of ritualistic abjection through the weight of its name. Driven out of the city, the goats will carry society’s burdens and evils on their backs. What have we ever done for them in return?

The line between hysteria and possession is fraught at best. The goat stands there with its sharp eyes, its body bending over as it munches up grass. Suddenly, it begins to kick at something that no one else can see; its body twitches in response to unknown stimuli. The goat shouts, its wails connoting emotion even if this is an entirely human interpretation. Their voice is unintelligible to me and yet meaning is intimated. You are heard, I say. I am trying to understand. The goat’s noises echo established perceptions of female sounds, which are ideologically associated “with monstrosity, disorder, and death” as well as with bestiality (Carson 1995, 121); Carson’s work unwittingly opens up space for a cross-species feminist conception of sound that considers animality alongside its more human histories.

The man I love is lying next to me, reading a book with the

focus that it deserves. I am reading my book distracted, energies spread thin across the haphazard terrain of my intellectual and artistic life. I want to say something so I leap around the bed, metaphorically jumping at his head with a loving kindness that is nevertheless unsettling. I discursively disturb the peace as I try to unwind. I am a “performative irritant” (Jones 2004, 5), my graceless movements disrupting logical space and time. There is something I want to say but I don’t know how to say it—something I want or need but I don’t know how to seek it out. And so I jump, leap, shout, mew, my ritual noises signifying nothing but animal (yet human) sound . I am becoming a baby goat, the animal that therefore I am.

I am also a human woman, growing sporadically into adulthood, contented with being in conversation with these goat companions in the capacity of feminist goatherd. The following are proposals for three speculative performance works with goats. In the works that follow, the goatherd re-appropriates the goat by immersing it in contexts rife with feminist symbolism, distancing it from the associations it has garnered under patriarchy: the goat as a licentious man , for example, or the goat as the Devil.

I. Participatory Goat Pentagonagram



I spend one month working as an apprentice to a goatherd at Riverdale Farm in Toronto, learning how to respectfully interact with the goats who live there. At the end of the month,

I will lead each goat to a position in the grass that represents one of five points on a pentagram. This will in effect create a live goat pentagram, pending the goat’s willingness to stay in one spot for any length of time. Through the creation of a live goat pentagram in the space of Riverdale Farm, I seek to re-appropriate the historical goat and pentagram association from the Church of Satan and its masculinist cult of Baphomet . The witchy goatherd, performed by myself, brings a self-reflexive femininity to the space of the goat pentagram, arguably reclaiming the pagan feminist relationship to goats. Notably, the performance is fraught with issues of consent: animals are unable to give their informed consent in a manner that humans legally understand (for example, verbal consent). This is a problem that the performance seeks to address in a humane way; I draw from methodologies of body-mind centering, anti-oppression theory, feminist theory, queer theory, and Donna Haraway’s “Cyborg Manifesto” in the hopes of attuning to the goats’ willingness to work with me and thereby developing a mode of communication with the goats that functions as consent. Whether the goats are participating on their own volition or whether they are being obligated is a question that might be raised in relation to participatory performance more broadly.



II. Lonely Goatherd Mountain Stroll

The feminist goatherd is a witch, a lonely witch who wanders through mountainous paths with a herd of goats beside her. Unlike the 'lone wolf' that patriarchal art and literary history is so apt to elevate, the feminist goatherd is embedded in a community of witches and goats, emotionally responsible to this community even as she tends toward feelings of loneliness and ambivalence. Walking becomes the feminist goatherd's customary ritual, where she explores her surroundings through daily embodied practice. The relationship between the goatherd and the goats is conscientiously nearing symbiosis: they mutually support each other in their shared rituals. The goats reveal to her things she has not noticed before, just as she guides the goats to areas that they might not have ventured to. Not so much a therapy as a part of her artistic practice, these long walks with her goat companions bring clarity and comfort to the feminist goatherd; the act of walking sheds light on the ambivalences and contradictions that percolate in the young goatherd's inquisitive mind. The goats and the goatherd tread lightly on these goat-paths, leaving little trace in their wake. Ontologically, the witchy goatherd exists somewhere between the goddess and the cyborg: a contemporary witch, she is connected to the earth and her goat companions just as she is connected to GPS on her iOS device. A cyborg in Donna Haraway's sense of the term, the feminist goatherd straddles the line between machine and organism; between human and animal; between organic and non-organic; between social reality and fiction (Haraway 1991, 292). In this durational performance, the feminist goatherd documents these daily mountain strolls through the note function on her iPhone.

III. Moon Hut Ololyga Ritual with Goats

In general the women of classical literature are a species given to disorderly and uncontrolled outflow of sound—to shrieking, wailing, sobbing, shrill lament, loud laughter, screams of pain or of pleasure and eruptions of raw emotion in general. As Euripides puts it, 'For it is woman's inborn pleasure always to have her current emotions coming up to her mouth and out through her tongue' (Andromache)

- Anne Carson, "The Gender of Sound"



In this piece, the feminist goatherd gathers a group of her goat and witch companions and leads them to the moon hut. The moon hut is a shed-like construction built by the feminist goatherd to provide a space to engage in the ritualistic shouting of "ololyga"; Carson describes the onomatopoeic "ololyga" as a ritual shout that does not signify anything except its own sound (Carson 1995, 125). The moon hut is roofless, constructed from four panels of cedar and carved with the waxing-full-waning moon symbol so significant to feminist goatherds. There are similarities between the ritualistic shouting that takes place in the moon hut and contemporary iterations of ancient traditions: for example, in primal scream therapy and laughter yoga. The ololyga rituals take place according to monthly rhythms determined by the particular goatherd and goat companions. While

the feminist goatherd often engages in this ritual according to her biological rhythms as a cisgendered woman, the space is open to people of all gender identities. The moon hut is a physical representation of what Julia Kristeva calls the chora, a womb-like space of pre-Symbolic rhythms and ruptures . The moon hut holds space for the witches and the goats to make the sounds that they feel compelled to make, regardless of who is listening or whether they will be understood. The moon hut is a feminist space, functioning as a symbolic counter to the patriarchy, which seeks to keep the mouths of women and animals closed (Carson 1995, 127). The reasoning behind the inner workings of this ritual are not yet empirically understood, though there are theories around the efficacy of catharsis and the healing capabilities of vibration in the space of the moon hut.

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NOTES

[1] "But it interests me that the radical otherness of the female is experienced by Alkaios, as also by Ernest Hemingway, in the form of women's voices uttering sounds that men find bad to hear. Why is female sound bad to hear?" (Carson 1995, 124).

[2] Anne Carson describes the onomatopoeic "ololyga" as a ritual shout that does not signify anything except its own sound (Carson 1995, 125).

[3] Etymologically, "goat" can refer to "a licentious man" (OED).

[4] In 1919, the goat was appropriated by the Church of Satan as its symbol, with an upside-down pentagram placed on the goat's head (Wikipedia).

[5] Moon triad; note the history of the use of the two crescent moons to symbolize the balance of masculine and feminine principles respectively. The waxing full waning significance with regards to goddess mythology and the maiden, mother, and crone.

[6] In the Lacanian sense: The chora comes before the Symbolic, which is before language and signification. While the Male principle is linguistic, structural, and conceptual, the Female principle is affective, corporeal, and non-conceptual.

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is a Toronto-based artist and PhD candidate at York University. Her dissertation takes up auto-theory as a mode of contemporary feminist cultural production, considering the ways it manifests in performance, video, literature, critical theory, and sound. She is on the Board of Directors for Trinity Square Video and the programming committee for the Feminist Art Conference. Her work has been exhibited in galleries and artist-run centres across Canada.

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