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dog person

nature–cultures of more-than-human kinship in Edinburgh and on the internet

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PhD Social Anthropology
University of Edinburgh
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Maythe Seung-Won Han

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abstract and lay summary

This dissertation is an ethnographic bricolage of portraiture of dogs and their humans in Edinburgh and on the internet. Through stories of dogs and dog people before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, it explores the formations, negotiations, and maintenance of knowledge, childhood, race, loneliness, class, and music in the nature–cultures of more-than-human kinship. In the chapters, I navigate the diverse and (sometimes) contradictory collections of sentiments, sensibilities and subjectivities as produced by and projected onto bodies and movements while situating them in the temporally and spatially specific contexts of Edinburgh and the internet from 2019 to 2020.

At the heart of this work is (more-than-human/multispecies) kinship, seen as a form of domestication with intended and unintended consequences. Even though warmth, joy, and companionship of more-than-human kin relations did endure and flourish, so did conflicts, hardships, and tensions. While kinship across the species boundary was described as a source and practice of unconditional love, the histories of selective dog breeding, neoliberal late-capitalism, and animalisation of racialised humans were also entangled with and permeated more-than-human kin-making. An exercise in staying with the trouble (Haraway 2016), kinship between dogs and their humans constantly meshed together the warm and the chilling, the fuzzy and the prickly, the comfortable and the tense.

Building on more-than-human anthropology, anthropology of kinship, multidisciplinary human-animal studies, and anthrozoology, this dissertation speaks to wider questions and concerns about what it means to make kin with one another and how to live a good life together amidst various troubles of our time-space as well as its various reflections, refractions, and reverberations in the mundaneness of everyday life in Edinburgh and on the internet.

acknowledgements

I never wanted a collie. Not because I didn't like them as a breed, but because of my circumstances. Collies were, as my participants have described, "a bit nuts", "crazy", "assholes", "a lot", and "so energetic". Being a millennial in the world that I was inhabiting at the time I first started considering getting a dog, I thought, sensibly, that I should get a dog that wouldn't be bouncing off the walls, destroying the house, and can be left alone for a while from time to time. Collies didn't seem like what I was looking for in the slightest.

But my ex-partner insisted that we adopt Frank (called Hank back then), a collie cross. "But look at his face!", he said, pointing at Frank's portrait on the laptop monitor that displayed a grid of photos of adoptable dogs from Sochi Dogs, a charity that facilitated international dog adoption from Sochi, Russia to the US and Canada. I gave in, maybe a little too quickly. Frank did have extremely sensitive eyes and a bashful expression that I just couldn't say no to. I had a phone call with a charity volunteer who asked me questions about my living situations, which I answered honestly. *We live on the 9th floor in a one-bedroom apartment in Toronto, but we live across the street from a large dog park. No yard, but we have a balcony. No car, but I do have a driver's license and frequently rent cars for longer trips. I'm an avid walker, and savvy with public transit. He'll be my first dog, though I grew up with dogs in the family. Yes, everybody in the house is okay with getting a dog.* The volunteer said that it seemed like Frank could be a good fit, and that the adoption could be arranged in a month when they were scheduled to fly a group of newly adopted dogs over together.

My ex was not involved much in the formal adoption process, as Frank was going to be my — and not *our* — dog. I filled out the paperwork, paid the adoption fee, emailed back and forth with charity workers, and booked a car rental for Frank's pick-up to take place on the 2nd of April 2017. Even though he was the one that insisted on adopting Frank, he was never really enthused about dogs (should've known this was not a good sign). But I was ready and willing to take full responsibility for Frank — a dog that I was certainly excited, but also quite apprehensive, to adopt. I

signed all the paperwork and paid all the fees; I prepared the home and myself for a dog whom I have never met to join the family.

And I waited. I waited a long month for all the necessary paperwork and procedures to be finished before Frank could be flown over, but the day before I finally got to meet him felt even longer. Frank had been flown as cargo on a commercial airline from Sochi, Russia to Morristown, New Jersey, where he stayed overnight at a volunteer's home to recover from the long journey. I was informed via email that he arrived safely, was eating, drinking, and sleeping just fine, and had no accidents in the house. The next day, he was flown from Morristown to Niagara, New York by a volunteer pilot who operated his own small plane. I waited, pacing in the small regional airport in Niagara, counting down the minutes to Frank's arrival, checking my phone constantly for any texts from the volunteer pilot.

And then he arrived, my new baby — not wrapped in a blanket carried by a stork but covering in the back corner of the small cargo section in the side of the light aircraft. The pilot coaxed and lifted him out, planting his four feet on the tarmac. The heat from the engine made the April air feel thicker than it was as I approached him slowly; the pilot handed me the lead that was attached to his harness along with a manila envelope full of adoption paperwork that I might need to show to the border agents on our way back home. Frank was frazzled, uncertain and unsure and unsettled, and I felt similarly. I thanked the pilot, who snapped a few photos of our first encounter for the organisation he volunteered for, and rushed to get Frank in the rental car for the trip back to Toronto, back to the place we called our home for just over a year before we moved to Edinburgh for my PhD, for *this* PhD.

Frank blossomed in Edinburgh. With all the green space, dog-friendly businesses and public transit, Frank and I got to explore the city together on foot, bus, and train. He became more sociable, more curious, and more loving. But while Frank's experience of Edinburgh was largely full of fun, excitement, and joy, I had some of the roughest time in my life in Edinburgh. In addition to the PhD, which quickly consumed my life, my relationship fell apart overnight with absolutely no warning and these words that haunt me still — “I love you, but I just can't live with a dog”.

The day after he left, Frank went looking for him, pointing his flaring nostrils into every corner in the flat, even the bathroom that he usually stayed out of due to his disdain for bath time. He whined, cried, and sniffed. It broke my heart, for me and for Frank. I cried, starved, and struggled to exist for a while, scraping by to do just the bare minimum and often failing even at that. I couldn't tell the day of the week, time of the day. I couldn't keep any food or water down. I could barely crawl out of bed and shower, something I've always enjoyed. I often held Frank and cried while caressing his face in my palms, hunched over and ugly crying on to his soft ears.

But Frank never once rushed me. He stayed by my side, always within arm's reach, not making a peep. He didn't fuss over his meals like he often did; he didn't bark at the door like he always did. He just patiently waited for me to heal, hoping that I would be able to take him for a walk at least twice a day, even for ten minutes, which I forced myself to do even when I was crying, my face glistening with tears and snot. *Just twice a day, just for ten minutes*, I reassured myself as I tried to hold back yet another bout of tears that always seemed to come at the most inconvenient times.

But Frank *stayed*. He stayed with me through all the tears, the dragging footsteps, the sighs — the trouble that came with the heartbreak — and we became more invested in each other, more responsible toward each other, and more *like* each other, too. He got me through heartbreaks, loneliness, and the PhD, and in the process, taught me what it means to commit to each other, to be(come) with one another, and to love unconditionally — the only way to really love. He taught me how to be vulnerable and how to maintain boundaries. He taught me that there is strength in being soft and sensitive. He taught me how to be grateful for the most mundane of things. And for everything he's taught me, and continues to teach me, I thank him with everything I have. I hope to be able to show my gratitude in ways that matter to him for the rest of our lives, our kinship, together.

It sometimes feels unreal that I speak and write fluently in English, a language that haunted me throughout my childhood in Seoul as a seemingly unconquerable feat. In fact, I still have nightmares from time to time about forgetting how to speak English despite having spoken it every single day

for almost two thirds of my life. But I have grown to have a strangely intimate and comfortable relationship with the English language, which once seemed impossible but soon became one of the most important tools in my education and career, thanks to my parents, my umma (mom) and appa (dad). They made immense and fracturing sacrifices — in their careers, family life, health — in their endeavour to raise me in Canada, a foreign country that didn't exactly make any of us feel particularly welcome or wanted. Umma gave up her job as an anaesthesiologist to become a full-time, stay-at-home mother that she never wanted to be, and appa became a 'goose dad', staying in Seoul to work and financially support the family abroad and coming to visit during school holidays. I still feel the sore remnants of the past today; migration left my family with unresolved wounds that still open every now and then, and deep scars and more recent bruises that remind me of the pains that I saw and felt.

Yet umma and appa still fully supported my decision to migrate to the UK, where I didn't know anyone, for my postgraduate studies. They believed in me, encouraged me, and helped me stay with my troubles even when I wasn't sure if I could, by myself, in yet another foreign country. Even when we don't see eye to eye, even when our expressions of love don't neatly align, somehow, I *know* that they love me and that they always will. And for their love, pep talks on video calls and via texts, care packages filled with Korean food — their continued kinship with me — I thank them and hope to be a daughter they are not only be proud of, but happy for.

Speaking of kinship — long before I started the PhD programme, and even before I declared my major in anthropology as an undergraduate student in Canada, Janet Carsten's written works gently nudged me toward kinship studies. But having known her, and not just her words, for four years now, I have much more than her written words to be grateful for. As my principal supervisor, she guided me not only with unparalleled professionalism and expertise, but also with kindness that never felt insincere and honesty that was never brutal. Her encouragement meant the world to me, her reassurances comforting my heart in times of doubt and fear. For her nurturing and understanding guidance that taught me to be an ethnographer, writer, and person unafraid of embracing messiness in work and in life, I thank her.

As my second supervisor, Beckie Marsland has shown me generosity and care when I wasn't able to show myself the same kind of generosity and care. She reminded me to be kind to myself when others weren't, to give myself time and grace instead of rushing. She never once made me feel judged for being vulnerable, and always helped me get back up when I was down. Her confidence in not just my work but my resilience has always given me strength, even in the coldest and loneliest of times. For her support that allowed me to find self-love, I thank her.

I also thank Vanessa, my therapist, for her support in my ongoing foray into self-love. In the past year that I have known her, she has held me in her space gently while I worked toward something that I was never any good at: patience. I thank her for continuing to teach me, no matter how difficult, how to sit with loneliness and hopelessness, how to wait for these less-than-ideal feelings to pass, while keeping my heart unhardened and open to the world.

And even at my loneliest, I had friends who surrounded me with their warmth, allowing me to be vulnerable in the safety of their love. Saj and Joon, my chosen family in Toronto who have supported me through the lowest lows and celebrated with me through the highest highs; Gemma, who has navigated the turbulent waters of dating in Edinburgh with me; Wren and Christian, the best godparents that Frank could ask for; Seda and Riccardo who have, in their words, 'adopted' me and certainly make me feel at home even when I am plagued with instability and precarity; Kitty and Snoopy who sat with me through many late-night and tearful Netflix binges; Thao and Rine who have made time to craft and chat with me online, especially in my darkest hours; Leon, who introduced me to the poem that I open the dissertation with, and Sofia who introduced me to Leon; my lobster ladies and the 'nutting associates' who I can always go to for advice, reassurance, and laughter; and so many others who have made an impact on this dissertation and in my life — I thank them all for being a part of my life and this project.

Last but certainly not least, I thank my research participants, human and canine. Without them, this project would not have been possible. Words, though they have been my primary tool, cannot begin to capture the significance of their contribution to this dissertation, the lengths to which they've gone, especially in damp and windy weather conditions of Edinburgh. For their willingness to share

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a beginning

dog

Adriana Lisboa (2021)¹

science still speculates
if you can distinguish well between the green
and the red and the yellow
it tells that in the depths of your eyes
there are pigments that reflect and amplify the light
a hundred and thirty-five times more
than the human eye
and what is seen in front of the TV
is a progression of slides
since you can see more frames
per second than people

but when I touch the tip
of my nose to yours
and our gazes intertwine
there is no science
maybe there is not even history
what sees the woman
in the dog and what sees
in the woman the dog
behind the eyes the brain the memory
a gist of mystery older than us
two
animals that reflect
and amplify the light

¹ The poem is originally written in Brazilian Portuguese. It was translated by a friend, Leon Bellinha, who also introduced me to the poem.

a mythical tangent (a small tendril to hold on to)

Growing up, I had a pile of books that I read and re-read obsessively for *years*. The books sat on my bedroom floor, stacked with such chaos that whenever I walked by the pile, it wobbled rather precariously. Many of these books — encyclopaedia, illustrations, cartoons, and novels — were, of course, about dogs. But within this pile, there was a series of 18 books that were distinctly not about dogs. They immersed me in depths of emotions through epic tales of love, heartbreak, betrayal, loyalty, grief, celebration, brutality, and longing, and I ate these stories up — the mythical stories of Greek (and Roman) gods, goddesses, and demi-gods, fantastical creatures and earthly beasts, and humans. Often found flipping through the pages past my bedtime, I was thrilled to see new kernels of petty drama unfold between Poseidon and Athena, found myself rooting for an unlikely happily-ever-after between Eros and Psyche, and grieved the tragic deaths of my favourite characters, including and especially Argos, Odysseus' dog who waited for him to return home from the Trojan War for two decades and perished in extreme happiness and relief upon Odysseus' delayed homecoming.

These myths played a foundational role in this project — not just because they are often considered to be something of a bedrock of 'western culture', but because they situate my perspectives from which this project cannot be separated. These myths, even before I knew what anthropology was, encouraged an anthropological thinking of sorts: the surprisingly everyday nature of these stories imbued extraordinary possibilities within the fabric of the ordinary while at the same time coalescing and confusing the strange and the familiar seamlessly. And more pertinently to this research, they often transgressed normative boundaries of nature (and super-nature) and culture, human and nonhuman, mortal and immortal, material and immaterial, and fiction and non-fiction with affective magic that made even the most outlandish narratives relatable and *real*.

This project was an opportunity for me to revisit these myths that have been burned into my memory since childhood to understand ethnographically what Tsing (2015) called 'symbiopoiesis', the co-development of "the complex of organisms and their symbionts as an evolutionary unit" (142), which I understand as a kind of multispecies kinship. Paying attention to the ways in which

dogs and their humans in Edinburgh lived seemingly ordinary multispecies lives that challenged prescriptive notions involved in kinship, I recount the various ways and expressions with which such kinship was produced, negotiated, understood, and described. Like the myths, the ethnographic stories that constitute this dissertation are varied in plot, genre/form, and lessons, and involve more-than-human participants who co-produce and share experiences. While these stories do share some common thematic threads that interlace each chapter, they primarily provide a glimpse into the diverse repertoire of questions and concerns present in contemporary multispecies kinship. In taking this ‘mythical’ approach to constructing a dissertation, I hope to shed light on the multitudes and complexities of multispecies kinship and to nudge toward thinking twice about what it means to be kin, what it means to relate to one another.

Broadly, the memories and experiences that I bring to the fore are about what happens in situations characterised by tensions and ambiguities between ‘opposing’ or incommensurable categories, individuals, clashing definitions, shifting priorities in the context of more-than-human lives caught in the meshwork of contemporary and ongoing domestication (see Ingold 2010). As Cassidy (2007) wrote, domestication, although it may be commonly understood as a linear series of transitional and transformative events from ‘wild’ to ‘domesticated’, is more partial and complex in its mutuality, cooperation, exchange, and symbiosis. The concept of domestication itself, then, has become “slippery and imprecise” (Cassidy 2007, 3) as it “has undergone a transformation ... where ‘domestication’ no longer unambiguously denotes a conscious and unequal power relationship between distinct agents” (Cassidy 2007, 4).

However, I show that it is from these “uncontrolled slippages that occur when people, animals and things are brought into close proximity” (Cassidy 2007, 13) that productive speculation emerges. And it is through the re-imaginings, re-negotiations, re-definitions, and re-prioritisations of different aspects of more-than-human kinship that I attend to the specificities of the accounts that foreground these thinkings and practices, and simultaneously endeavour to situate these accounts — as well as the organisms involved in these accounts — culturally and historically. In the act of situating, I emphasise once again the myth-like traits of the dissertation: the stories told in Greek and Roman myths reflected and refracted ordinary sensibilities of specific cultures in a specific time,

just as I aim to depict and queer cultural notions and everyday affects surrounding multispecies kinship between dogs and their humans in Edinburgh in a time of intersecting turbulences.

In the following chapters, domestication — in its many manifestations, all considered as forms and processes of more-than-human kinship — serves a critical role in framing the contemporary dog culture in Edinburgh through the yoking together of (multispecies) kinship, economies, ecologies, nature, and culture. The (ongoing) domestication of nonhuman animals, and specifically of dogs, in the UK is a custom with long history that ties together “humans and nonhuman ecologies, evolution, development, history, affects, performance, technologies, and more” (Haraway 2016, 63) — and I’d like to add, *subjectivities* and *sensibilities*. Keeping in mind that the dichotomy of domestic-wild is often analogous to “a set of binary oppositions including nature-culture, private-public, female-male, animal-human, and child-adult” (Cassidy 2007, 8–9), I consider domestication as a set of complex processes with intended and unintended consequences that involves human, nonhuman, as well as the environment that is saturated with animate and inanimate things that form ever-changing and densely woven layers of the world. I hope to contribute to the growing body of literature on domestication within anthropology as well as to multi, trans, inter, and undisciplinary efforts that connect topical and methodological expertise to produce and translate new kinds of knowledge surrounding the relationship between different species.

This dissertation, then, tries to situate contemporary ‘dog culture’ in Edinburgh and on the internet as part of domestication and its historical trajectories. It aims to push the boundaries of kinship studies as well as anthropology at large as a study of humanity that is inextricably and inherently entangled with non-humanities by making explicit connections between domestication and its role in kinship, and vice versa. In each of the chapters, I trace the ways in which notions of family, childhood, love, joy, loneliness, grief, violence — many of which are found in the myths I love and learned so much from — involved in kinship underpin the many paths of domestication as a mutual process that affect both humans and nonhumans alike in intended and unintended ways.

In this thesis, I principally consider white, middle-class people and their (often very well-treated, if not spoiled) dogs in a predominantly white and middle-class environment, though not all of my

human participants are white and/or middle-class. All self-identified as ‘dog person’, however. Focusing on a subset of population that anthropology has often neglected as a potential subject of study, I investigate how the stories and the phenomena that emerge from the intersection of whiteness and middle-classness manifest in and through the processes and practices of domestication as well as multispecies kinship and parenthood. Considering more-than-human kinship with dogs and domestication from the viewpoint of whiteness and middle-classness provides a chance to look at the entanglement of race and class with notions and practices that seem to be outside of the strictly human realm such as domestication of nonhuman animals. Placing an ethnographic emphasis on these human classificatory concepts thus serves as a specific and situated lens through which to study more-than-human ways of living and relating.

Likewise, I attend to the ways in which studying (with) nonhuman animals sheds light on, conforms to, and challenges human norms and notions surrounding domestication and kinship. Taking seriously nonhuman animals’ capabilities to think, learn, know, and communicate — and by extension, their abilities to affect and be affected by other beings and their environments — I concentrate on stories that create and carry a multiplicity of meanings and significances. As I suggest in the subsequent chapters, dogs, while part of the stories that their humans tell and share, have their own, dog-specific understanding of and engagement with the world around them (*umwelt*) and their own stories beyond the immediate grasp and influence of humans in and around their lives.

Inspired once again by myths, I foreground stories as data and storytelling as method. Much like the mythical tales of ancient Greek and Roman cultures, these dog stories from contemporary Edinburgh and digital spheres are moulded by the biological, social, cultural, and historical forces that influence even the most mundane aspects of life. The stories I share in this dissertation specifically highlight and opine on the intimately woven connections among broader phenomena — that may, especially at first glance, seem removed or separate from the immediate spheres of multispecies kinship — such as ongoing and rebranded colonialism/imperialism, a viral pandemic, and late-stage capitalism. I hope to process, through my writing, how these large-scale occurrences and dynamics might unfold in ordinary lives of dogs and their humans, influence the ways in which

they find meaning, affect their decision-making, and shape their everyday intimacies — their multispecies kinship.

In these stories, I pay special attention to the overarching and recurring theme and practice of creative speculation in liminal spaces as crucial to making kin. This is in part inspired by Haraway and Tsing’s call to find ways to stay and thrive with the trouble of the world that is in many ways ruined, brutalised, and in pain. In many ways, then, one of the aims of this dissertation is to tell stories about “contingencies of encounter” (Tsing 2015, 142) featuring beings of multiple but connected species that draw our gaze to the larger moments and phenomena from which these stories emerge, as well as to address the broad concern of how to live well together in distressing and troubled times.

The introduction aims to set the stage for the dissertation, starting with a note on form, explaining the multiple ethnographic genres — a doctoral dissertation, a visual and textual bricolage, a love letter — that I attempt to adhere to, navigate, challenge, and expand on throughout this work. Then, I engage with scholarship on nature–cultures, economies and ecologies, and bodies in multispecies kinship that have informed and directed my ethnographic thinking, practice, and writing. In the next section, I explain my methodologies, fieldwork and field site, and ethical considerations, providing a detailed rationale for how and why the research was conducted the way it was. Lastly, I provide a brief roadmap to the dissertation, a quick glance into what follows the introduction.

note on form

This dissertation, much like the multispecies kinship between dogs and humans it explores, holds multitudes in form and genre, and it does so purposefully.

It is a doctoral dissertation, a multipiece document that aims to contribute original ideas and to introduce my perspectives to the body of knowledge in the discipline of anthropology. At the same time, the dissertation also traces inter- and multi-disciplinary paths with other fields such as (anthro)zoology, feminist theory, critical whiteness studies, environmental humanities, and media studies. But in traversing different disciplinary knowledge systems through an ethnographic lens, the dissertation aims to suggest an *undisciplinary* ethnography as a branch of ethnographic writing that is characterised by taking inspiration from scholarship from beyond the confines of fields or disciplines. I argue that challenging the normative boundaries of the discipline is an especially crucial endeavour in anthropology, a field steeped in coloniality that manifests in sometimes surprising, but in many ways unsurprising ways. Then, the dissertation also aims to provide commentary on anthropological norms in the act of merging intellectual genealogies.

It is also an experimental (and playful) ethnographic bricolage through which I practised allowing the world around me to surprise, challenge, and guide me and my work even if it meant being pulled in considerably different directions (especially through the COVID-19 pandemic that affected the latter half of the fieldwork). Using whatever ethnographic materials were afforded to me, I attempted to organise the pieces of everyday life that I experienced in ways that best elucidate their significances. While the chapters are threaded with recurring and common themes and topics that stitch each chapter together, they are also arranged with deliberate disjointedness as a collection of essays that sit next to each other, interspersed by photo essays that invite sitting and feeling with dogs. Rather than trying to artificially polish the disjuncture inherent in the messy realities of ethnographic fieldwork, I lean into and embrace this honest representation of incoherence and mess that stemmed from paying intensive “attention to the here and now of encounter, in all its contingencies and surprises” (Tsing 2015, 46).

By experimenting with ethnographic forms, I demonstrate the generativity of taking this bricolage approach to ethnography: even the most mundane and available materials can spark re-imaginings with new meanings when they are placed in proximity to each other in unexpected but inseparably connected ways. The bricolage is made of six ethnographic chapters and six photo essays that are disparate materials from one another and can stand alone. But when read together, the collection becomes what I think is a raw and honest reflection of the fieldwork experiences involved in this project. It endeavours to capture the visceral, expressed through the bricolage form: the scatteredness entailed in doing urban ethnography, the unpredictable rhythms of multispecies ethnography, the unresolvable sense of distance in doing digital ethnography in the various stages of the pandemic times.

It is an extended love letter of sorts to dogs, the greatest animal I know, and the greatest of the greats, my dog, Frank. The essays may not necessarily read like an epistolary work by human standards, but they are indeed letters in that they have been read out loud — performed — many, many times to Frank, as scribbles in my fieldnotes, nascent paragraphs, and eventually, whole chapters. They are also letters in that they aim to convey deep and heartfelt feeling and explore the implications of these feelings out loud with the reader.

This multitude in form — while still adhering to the standards required for a dissertation that it must be an original work of research that contributes to anthropological knowledge in the academy — also reflects my broad running themes of the dissertation: speculation and liminality. In belonging to multiple forms with blurred boundaries, just like the dogs and the multispecies families they belong to, this dissertation aims to spark a re-imagining of the ethnographic genre.

Following the social, biological/evolutionary, cultural, epistemic, political phenomena surrounding dogs and their humans, the kinds of questions I ask in the dissertation are situated amid conceptually interconnected and overlapping bodies of scholarship in anthropology and beyond. First, I draw from the fields of anthropology and STS (Science and Technology Studies) to explore ‘nature–cultures’, where ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ are recognised and understood as inseparable and contingent concepts, not dualistic binaries. Second, I look at multidisciplinary works across anthropology and cultural studies and theory to ground my thinking about ecologies/economies as an extension of sorts from the nature/culture binary. I consider works that foreground multispecies affect and ‘stuff’, and the intersections thereof. Third, I review multidisciplinary scholarship on multispecies kinship in anthropology, STS, ecology, and queer theory. This review of literature is not meant to be an exhaustive examination (as it would be impossible as well as not particularly helpful), but rather an intellectual engagement to ground and situate this research project among the works that have been foundational and inspiring to my thinking (much like the way in which I conceptualise the metaphysics of kin-making).

nature–cultures

The literature on nature, culture, and the varied ways of understanding the relationship between the two concepts is vast and spans across multiple disciplines. Here, I highlight an assemblage of works that seek to grasp and/or problematise the binary dichotomisation of nature and culture (and perhaps also advocate for the recognition of the world(s) as ‘nature–cultures’). I pay particular attention to the works that I found especially fruitful for producing knowledges about the relationships between human and nonhuman beings and for taking seriously the significance of conceptual messiness involved in multispecies relatings.

Concerned with how ideas behave in English — and more broadly, ‘Euro-American’ — kinship, Strathern problematised the often taken-for-granted notion in anthropological studies of kinship that “kinship systems are ... after the facts, and specifically after certain well-known facts of nature. The facts, it is held, are universal whereas ideas about kinship obviously vary” (1992, 3). That is, kinship has widely been understood, and even naturalised, as cultural product that groups or societies produced out of natural (and thus universal) facts. However, Strathern wrote, upon examining the habits, practices, norms, and nomenclatures comprised in English kinship, that

“kinship and family could play either nature to the individual’s cultural creativity, or society to the individual’s natural spirit of enterprise. But if that former symbolic order pitted natural givens against cultural choice, social convention against natural variation, then it no longer persuades. These perspectives will not play off against one another” (43).

In other words, ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ are not dichotomously oppositional to each other; instead, they overlap in many parts, relying on one another for the shapes and definitions they are able to take, while also existing in conceptual tension with one another.

Distilled to a seemingly simple phrase, Strathern contended that what made things ‘natural’ or ‘cultural’, then, was ultimately a matter of *perspective*, and that their connection was founded on both similarities and dissimilarities, which were recognised as such because of perspectival shifts: similarities were noticed from the effort to see connections while dissimilarities were noticed from the recognition of differences, which are actually “*connection from another angle*” (1992, 72, original emphasis). Understood in this way, ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ are connected in that they are “domains that run in analogous fashion insofar as each operates in a similar way according to laws of its own” (72). But “at the same time, each is also connected to a whole other range of phenomena which differentiate them — the activities of human beings [which would normally be considered ‘cultural’], for instance, by contrast with the physical properties of the universe [which would normally be deemed ‘natural’]” (72–73). In other words, the differences between things stemmed not from whether something was inherently ‘natural’ or ‘cultural’, but from their belonging to something else *from particular, and shiftable, perspectives*.

Strathern called this kind of connection *merographic*, where “anything may be a part of something else, minimally part of a description in the act of describing it” (73). In merographic connections, then, “nothing is in fact ever simply part of a whole because another view, another perspective or domain, may redescribe it as ‘part of something else’” (73). This is an especially salient notion in kinship studies as well as this project: “The popular supposition that kinship is only a ‘part’ of society rests on the fact that it is also a ‘part’ of biological process. Such parts are not equal to one another. The perspective that gives each of them its distinctive nature appears always as a different order of phenomena. Each order that encompasses the parts may be thought of as a whole, as the individual parts may also be thought of as wholes. But parts in this view do not make wholes” (76). Instead, they bring to the fore the “principles, forces, relations that exist beyond the parts” (76) as well as the gaps that might exist between the parts, highlighting the ways in which the acts of contextualisation (which allow for different perspectives) produce neither wholly natural nor wholly cultural — ‘natural–cultural’ — ways of knowing and relating.

In kinship, then, ‘cultural’ and ‘natural’ components are also parts that do not add to a whole (for example, while every part might be seen as parts that add up to make up a whole individual, certain biological units have their own expressions and potential mutations). Instead, kinship “is, so to speak, the place of overlap” (Strathern 1992, 86) where facts of nature and facts of culture are merographically connected. Merographic ways of thinking, which are central to how knowledges surrounding multispecies kin relations are produced, are crucial to this project, and especially the first chapter, *knowing about dogs*: for instance, the very elements that may be considered ‘natural’ or ‘cultural’ about the relationships between dogs and their humans may well differ from what is ‘natural’ or ‘cultural’ about intraspecies kinship among humans, and the differences here lie in perspectives and contexts rather than the totality of ‘nature’ or that of ‘culture’.

If Strathern challenged the very notion that ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ were dichotomous totalities by arguing instead that parts belong to different wholes with moving boundaries that differ perspectively and never add up to a neatly circumscribed whole, Mary Douglas (1966) deliberately leaned into dichotomisation as both a way to create arbitrary order and a way to make more visible

the ambiguities in life that do not fit neatly into opposing categories. That is, while Strathern disavowed the 'wholes' of 'nature' and 'culture', Douglas was concerned with the spaces between these supposed or imaginary 'wholes' as generative place, as well as the conceptual occupants — 'pollutants' — of these liminal spaces.

Admitting that “dramatic combination of opposites is a psychologically satisfying theme full of scope for interpretation at varying levels” (1966, 209), Douglas asserted that “[i]t is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, about and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created” (1966, 5), because “[w]here there is no differentiation there is no defilement” (1966, 198). Her investigations were grounded on the dichotomised way of thinking prevalent in many societies. Douglas contended that the existence of dirt or pollution is reflective of a system that orders and classifies things while rejecting elements that do not conform to its classificatory rules (1966, 44). For example, she argued that certain animals were prohibited because “the underlying principle of cleanness in animals is that they shall conform fully to their class. Those species are unclean which are imperfect members of their class, or whose class itself confounds the general scheme of the world” (1966, 69; also see Douglas 1957 for her analysis of why the pangolin is at the centre of Lele religious cults). In short, what allows for pollution or dirt to exist is the conceptualisation of the world around us as rigidly structured dichotomies.

Similarly, Tambiah (1969), upon finding that there are nonhuman animals that did not conform neatly to existing cultural categories in Thailand, proposed that “simple intellectual deductions from a society’s formalized scheme of animal categories will not take us far unless we can first unravel the core principles according to which people order their worlds and the valuations they give to the categories” (1969, 452). To understand the attitudes toward these unaffiliated animals, Tambiah suggested that there is “neither a sense of affinity with animals ... nor a clear-cut distinction and separation from them, but rather a coexistence of both attitudes in varying intensities which create a perpetual tension” (1969, 455). That is, dietary regulations involving these unaffiliated animals showed that humans draw nature “into a single moral universe” (1969, 455) but at the same time separate nature and culture, fusing “attitudes of affinity and separation, opposition and integration

... to produce the complex correspondence of sex rules, house categories, and animal distinctions” in regard to both domesticated and wild animals (1969, 455).

Leach (1964) comparably drew a sociolinguistic comparison between animal edibility and incest prohibition, both of which Leach contended are entirely cultural (1964, 31, 33). Arguing that humans are trained to distinguish different ‘things’ in nature by giving them names (instead of seeing the world around us — nature — as a continuum), Leach highlighted how the dis-continuum is achieved “by means of a simultaneous use of language and taboo” (Leach 1964, 35). While language allows for naming of differentiated (by means of culture) elements of nature, taboo prevents the recognition of gaps between these differentiated elements as part of a continuum. It then follows that language “does more than provide us with a classification of things; it actually molds our environment” (Leach 1964, 36); in other words, culture shapes how nature is perceived, experienced, and understood.

Then, as Tambiah concluded, “Cultures and social systems are, after all, not only thought but also lived” (1969, 457) not only in the classified and categorised zones, but between and outside of them. And Douglas recognised, too, that “it is not always an unpleasant experience to confront ambiguity” (1966, 46), and that the “rest of life, which does not tidily fit the accepted categories, is still there and demands attention” (1966, 202). Paying attention to the things that do not fit readily into categories, then, Douglas contended that dirt and pollution, normally considered destructive as it disturbs order, can be creative, because as weeds and lawn cuttings can be turned into compost, what was rejected can be re-purposed for a renewal of life (1966, 196; 202; 207). Seeing purity as “the enemy of change, of ambiguity and compromise” (1966, 200) subverts pollution into an opportunity. This way of thinking had an interesting implication for my project, as dogs were often seen as beings that are neither entirely natural (as they share substances, affects, and homes — among other things — with humans) nor entirely cultural (as they are nonhuman animals descended from wildlife). As such, they are *pollutants* that do not fit a category neatly — yet they still exist and demand attention (Douglas 1966, 202; also see Tsing 2015 for the argument that contamination is an enormously generative practice). And, as I discuss in the first two chapters, these liminalities and

the understanding of dogs as creative pollutants offer different, and even *queer*, ways of thinking about more-than-human kinship.

Consequently, I come to understand that dogs' natural–cultural presence serves to *queer* the very structure of human spaces and families in this dissertation. Their disruption of order creates an opportunity for a new kind of (multispecies) kinship structure: one in which dogs inhabit the liminal spaces between the categories of nature and culture, of human and nonhuman, of dog and child, and more (also see Russell 2007 for the consideration of domestication as a kind of kinship that straddles nature and culture). In this way, the dichotomisation of nature and culture proved helpful to think with in my research as well.

Franklin (2007) took a somewhat different approach from both Strathern and Douglas, emphasising the inseparability of 'natural' biologies and 'cultural' semiotics wherein "biology is socially produced, thick with specific and accumulated histories, and always culturally mediated in each situated encounter" (2007, 6). Or, as she argued elsewhere (Franklin 2003), "biological facts are assembled, ... seen and understood" (2003, 66), which is to say that they go through a cultural process of naturalisation that pulls together and makes sense of partial pieces of information from seemingly disparate categories. Looking at Dolly the sheep as a historically situated being, Franklin demonstrated that Dolly "is a classic mixture of agricultural, scientific, medical, commercial, and industrial ambitions" (2007, 5) produced through a "novel alignment of the biological, cultural, political, and economic relations that connect humans, animals, technologies, markets, and knowledges" (2–3). The multitudes of Dolly underscored the famous sheep's *natural–cultural* character that traversed beliefs and categories often imagined as separate from one another in specific times and places in history, which I explore in depth in the chapter, *managing kinship through multispecies economies*.

Because Franklin's work was concerned explicitly with a popular nonhuman animal — sheep — in the UK, I drew from it many parallels and analogies in my project about dogs, another popular nonhuman animal in the UK. Dogs have much in common with Dolly the sheep who "embodies the legacies of embryology and reproductive biology but of selective breeding and the

industrialization of livestock through pastoralism” (3) in addition to “the long history of animal domestication, as well as the more recent histories of capital accumulation through selective breeding” (3). Specifically, our contemporary canine companions both embody and challenge the legacies and the histories of canine domestication, animal behaviour and veterinary sciences, selective breeding of pedigree dogs, heteronormative kin-making and reproductive futurism, commodification of dogs (which became so very apparent during the lockdown when the price of puppies soared), as well as deep-rooted (and thus often taken-for-granted) conceptual categories like race, breed, and species.² Perhaps taking seriously Douglas’ claim that “it is not always an unpleasant experience to confront ambiguity” (1966, 46), Franklin’s account of Dolly, then, illuminated new ways of experiencing normalised and naturalised affects and their implications that permeate many legacies and histories that gave rise to the ways in which dogs and their humans relate to one another.

However, as Strathern (1992) reminded in her work on merographic connections, the ‘wholes’ of these legacies and histories are not equal nor equivalent. That Dolly represents “the desire to distinguish the animal from the human, and to prevent their mixture, while also, paradoxically, embodying their ever more proximate union — and the fallacy of such a dividing line between them” (Franklin 2007, 30) speaks just as much to the tensions that exist among such unequal legacies and histories as to their inextricable entanglement. Then, it may be “precisely the linkages merography makes evident which open kinship up to manipulation, in a manner that is seen to be not only a biological possibility, but a social obligation” (Franklin 2003, 82). The significance of merographic thinking between natural and cultural is central to the first chapter, *knowing about dogs*, as I illustrate that epistemological practices involved in more-than-human kinship with dogs similarly vacillate between the natural and the cultural, each category describing, and thus constituting, each other.

Here, Latour’s claim that “All of culture and all of nature get *churned up* every day” (1993, 2, emphasis added) comes to mind. Latour contended that at the core of ‘modern’ thinking is the

² It is interesting to contrast Tuan’s (1984) view that domestication of dogs is an inherently unequal process that creates a master-pet relationship between humans and dogs that “is in any case inescapable” (6) with Clark’s argument that domestication is a process that gives rise to “the possibility of a shared world” (2007, 62).

dichotomisation of nature and culture as well as purification (separation or categorisation) and mediation (translation or hybridisation), which produced a paradox: if nature and culture were really conceptually and materially separate, there would be no need to purify or mediate, for there would be no hybrids containing aspects of both nature and culture (1993, 32; 34). This paradox, then, undermined the very foundation of modernity as the separation of nature and culture and of purification and mediation.

In lieu of modernity, whose underpinnings disintegrated along with its (false) dichotomies, Latour proposed that we envision a *nonmodern* existence in which we take into consideration both the dichotomous thinking as well as the hybrids that ‘modern’ thinking simultaneously rejects and enables (1993, 47). And it is in this proposal that I consulted Haraway’s crucial and relevant point that “Natures, cultures, subjects, and objects do not preexist their intertwined worldings” (2016, 13), of which modernity is no exception. Haraway thus shifted the focus of the inquiry from ideas surrounding nature–cultures to fleshly consequences of living in nature–cultures where stories of beauties as well as brutalities proliferate through ongoing co-evolution and co-constitution.

According to Haraway, then, lives in nature–cultures are complex, intertwined, and nondeterministic (i.e., there are no parts that add to a whole), continuously becoming-with rather than becoming, “tying together humans and nonhuman ecologies, evolution, development, history, affects, performance, technologies, and more” (2016, 63). This, in turn, necessitates the need to care and respond to one another even — or especially — in troubled times such as contemporary late-stage capitalism riddled with natural–cultural concerns that can only be addressed by

“giving and receiving patterns, dropping threads and failing but sometimes finding something that works, something consequential and maybe even beautiful, that wasn’t there before, of relaying connections that matter, of telling stories in hand upon hand, digit upon digit, attachment site upon attachment site, to craft conditions for finite flourishing on terra, on earth” (Haraway 2016, 10).

Franklin, Haraway, and Latour's insights influenced my reflections on liminality, which were initially prompted by Strathern and Douglas' works, and quite explicitly concerned with the in-betweens. While Strathern and Douglas compelled me to ask questions about epistemic practices that make use of nature(/)cultures, such as 'how do people produce, negotiate, and consolidate their knowledges about (their) dogs as beings that may not always fit into neat categories?', Franklin, Haraway, and Latour inspired me to think more about the metaphysical and ethical dimensions of multispecies kinship, such as how are the inseparable entanglements of 'nature' and 'culture' experienced in multispecies kinship? and how might we learn to live well with one another in the mess that is the contemporary more-than-human worlds?

economies and ecologies

One of the (false) dichotomies that I explore and challenge more explicitly in the dissertation — especially in the final two chapters — is that between 'economy' and 'ecology', which is perhaps analogous to and founded on the dichotomy of 'nature' and 'culture'. Adding to the works I explored in the previous section on nature–culture, I examine here the interconnectedness of 'economy' and 'ecology' (which have a distinct sense of separation between the domain of the human and that of the nonhuman animal) as an important framework underpinning domestication and its multiple manifestations. In short, this section of the literature review explores in depth what Bennett called the 'intricate dance' between humanity and nonhumanity (2010, 31) and the ways in which this dance pertains to multispecies kinship between dogs and their humans.

The words 'economy' and 'ecology' share an etymological root: the Ancient Greek word *oikos* (οἶκος), which, anglicised, forms the prefix 'eco-', meaning household or habitat. Economy, combining *oikos* and *nemol/nomos* (νέμω/νόμος), literally translates to 'household/habitat management' while ecology, combining *oikos* and *logia* (λογία), means 'the study of household/habitat'. Then, even though 'economy' often has a very anthropocentric connotation that distinctly refers to (monetary) activities and relationships in the human sphere and 'ecology' to those in the nonhuman domain, it is perhaps no surprise that the two are inseparably linked. I thus

conceptualise ecologies as bodily and affective engagements on an intra- as well as inter-species level in a shared environment, and economies as interconnected networks in which organisms (of same or different species) act together as co-evolving species to influence decisions in their given environment.

The examples of economic and ecological overlap are varied and abundant. Haraway (2016) traced the simultaneously economic and ecological ‘trouble’ of Premarin, which is a purified estrogen made from “the animal-industrial, complex, repeated pregnancies and long-term confinement of mares” (2016, 110). This product yoked together Haraway, a menopausal woman trying to avoid a genetic heart disease, and her dog Cayenne, who had become incontinent due to her age. Haraway wrote, stories of “slurping drafts of dubious estrogens in self-care and care of the other” (2016, 115) remind us of uncomfortable responsibilities owed to one another in troubled multispecies economies in natural–cultural kinship and relatings. And, as mentioned already in the previous section, Franklin (2007) situated Dolly the sheep in simultaneously economic and ecological historical frames, showing her connections to various biological, technological, and industrial contexts.

What intrigued me about the relationship among Premarin, Haraway, and Cayenne, and the coinciding spheres that made Dolly the sheep a product of what Franklin called ‘bioculture’ and ‘bioeconomy’ was that both examples highlight the simultaneously economic and ecological nature of domestication as “an ongoing relationship between people, animals, plants, and the environment” (Cassidy 2007). Many anthrozoological and zooarchaeological works have also highlighted the importance of the household and habitat in the process of domestication, once again evoking the shared *oikos* between economy and ecology. Domestication, then, is not to be understood as a simple act of “bringing animals into the household” (Russell 2007, 33), as it “has strayed from its association with the cozy hearth and sheltering enclosure of the *domus*” (Clark 2007, 49). Instead, in this project, I think about domestication of dogs (and also of humans) as an econo-ecological process (analogous to how I think about dogs themselves as natural–cultural beings): not only can dogs be found in overlaps and intersections of differentiated categories, they, in concert with their humans, also have an influence on how these overlaps and intersections manifest, driving economic as well as ecological phenomena.

I once again take inspiration from Tsing (2015), whose work explored ‘boundary objects’ (see Star and Griesemer 1989) that offer “translation between diverse economies” (Tsing 2015, 70) in pericapitalist spaces. Following the matsutake mushroom that grows in post-industrial capitalist ruins, Tsing demonstrated through bursts of ethnographic stories the historically contingent ways in which the mushroom worked as a boundary object that traversed the economic and ecological activities of various species and organisms, including humans. She attributed this quality of the mushroom to the necessity of collaboration, intentional or unintentional: “Without the ability to make workable living arrangements, species would die out. In the process, each organism changes everyone’s world” (Tsing 2015, 22) and each other.

In what she called ‘contaminated diversity’ in which there is no party that is self-contained or self-making, multispecies encounters constantly generate contingencies and surprises that make ongoing history through — often mundane and daily — relational activities. This concept of contaminated diversity is crucial to this project. As I look at dogs, humans, and their multispecies kinship as a form of contaminated diversity situated in the state of contemporary capitalism, the economic and ecological implications across the species boundary become increasingly visible and important to notice. How does this kind of kinship operate in and influence capitalistic practices that have both economic and ecological consequences? And listening carefully to Haraway’s urging us to ‘stay with the trouble’ (2016), I wonder, could capitalism be one of the many troubles that humans must stay with, especially alongside our dogs?

In my attempt to frame these rather big questions in terms of materiality, I turn to Bennett (2010) whose work foregrounded ‘thing-power’, “the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle” (6). Bennett argued that an assemblage, or “the contingent tableau” (2010, 5), of material things each with their own thing-power demanded to be noticed and interacted with, demonstrating the interconnected relationships between animate and inanimate entities as well as humans and nonhumans. Keeping in mind the capitalist frameworks in which this project is (inescapably) situated, I explore some of the material things that demand to be seen, noticed, and interacted with by dogs as well as their humans in the form of dog-related commodities,

such as dog food, treats, toys, health insurance, training classes, medical care, haircare products, and more, particularly in the chapter, *managing kinship through multispecies economies*.

Understanding these inanimate and commodified objects as having an immense capacity to affect living bodies and kin relations between the bodies, I also heed Bennett's advice to pay "attention to the object's 'qualitative moments', for these open a window onto nonidentity" (2010, 15), "that which is not subject to knowledge but is instead 'heterogeneous' to all concepts" (2010, 14). Putting Bennett's work in conversation with Strathern and Douglas, then, I understand these 'vibrant matters' that exude thing-power as materials that often evade categorisation and classification, allowing for thinking in liminal spaces that fall between different kinds of economies that are in overlapping conversations with one another. In these liminal spaces, a different (perhaps even *queer* in that it resists normative categorisation) kind of epistemological strategy is required to produce knowledge, a kind that is curious about the ambiguities involved in trying to know about things whose parts do not make a whole.

In this project, then, I situate these liminal materials and their qualitative moments in their contexts in an effort to explore the affective ways in which dogs and their humans participate together in their economies and ecologies by attuning to these qualitative traits of objects through the senses involved in bodily experiences. However, while Bennett suggested that materiality is "a rubric that tends to horizontalize the relations between humans, biota, and abiota" (2010, 112), I survey the ways in which materiality can be used to highlight the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1984) of different people (and their dogs) that is often laid out vertically to "function as markers of 'class'" (xxv).

Bourdieu (1984) argued that "the capacity to see (*voir*) is a function of the knowledge (*savoir*), or concepts, that is, the worlds, that are available to name visible things, and which are, as it were, programmes for perception" (xxv). That is, the ability to notice and recognise things "is a product of history reproduced by education" (xxvi). He further contended that taste, then, can classify people, who are in turn classified by their own classifications. By distinguishing between what is considered beautiful and ugly, or sophisticated and vulgar (or 'classy'/'posh' and 'trashy'/'chavy' in contemporary anglophone parlance), "the consumer helps to produce the product he [*sic*] consumes,

by a labour of identification and decoding” (Bourdieu 1984, 94), exhibiting their *habitus*, the ability to create practices and things that can be classified as well as the ability to distinguish between and appreciate those practices and things (166). And notably, “the most everyday choices of everyday life” (Bourdieu 1984, 32) rigorously distinguish one kind of *habitus* from another.

The concept of *habitus* thus framed my understanding of dog people’s everyday decision-making surrounding the commodities that they purchase and practices they engage in for their dogs, creating various more-than-human economies that knotted different kinds of capital — economic, cultural, and social — together. At the same time, acknowledging the vibrant materiality of these commodities and practices influenced my focus on inanimate things and their roles in the ongoing domestication involved in multispecies kinship. In considering the animating tastes, practices, and products that are deeply embedded into the multispecies lifestyles, I deliberate, in what ways do things and practices animate economies and ecologies of multispecies kinship between dogs and their humans? and what do these things and practices reveal about our bodies, our kinship, and the economic and ecological environments in which they reside?

bodies in more-than-human kinship

Pets (or companion animals) have become subjects of inquiry relatively recently in kinship studies. Scholars have shown that conceptualising domesticated animals as ‘family’ or ‘kin’ happens in multiple, and often overlapping, spheres: in the home (see Power 2008), in a veterinary clinic (see Ashall and Hobson-West 2017), in an economic society (see Franklin 2007), in an ecosystem (see Haraway 2015), and more. In this final section of the literature review, I engage with some existing works on (multispecies) kinship and their implications for this project.

Schneider, in a very small paragraph in his seminal work *American Kinship* (1968), wrote that dogs could never be kin because “you can get rid of the dog if you want to” (1968, 54). This statement was based on his argument that in American culture (which, according to Schneider, operated with symbols and meanings that are influenced by the relationship between nature and culture), “kinship

is defined as biogenetic” (1968, 23), because while legal relationships are terminable (by divorce, for instance), blood relationships, “culturally defined as being an objective fact of nature, of fundamental significance and capable of having profound effects” (1968, 24), are inalienable.

However, other scholars have shown that kinship may not always be understood as a relationship predicated on biogenetic genealogy. For example, Weston (1991) showed that what makes kinship authentic is not biological connection, but rather time spent together: kinship produced from friendship, attention, work, and care was more ‘real’ than blood ties in the cases of queer folks whose biological kinship ties have broken down. Taking both the ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ of kinship into account, Thompson (2001) demonstrated how biological and cultural facts were strategically negotiated by explanatory means to make ‘real’ the parenthoods that were made possible by fertility treatments and reproductive technologies.

Sahlins (2013) argued that “the idea of kinship ... is ‘mutuality of being’: people who are intrinsic to one another’s existence — thus ‘mutual person(s),’ ‘life itself,’ ‘intersubjective belonging,’ ‘transbodily being,’ and the like” (2013, 2). That is, “how it is that relatives emotionally and symbolically live each other’s lives and die each other’s deaths” (2013, ix). Then, in their common lives, kinspersons share sufferings, joys, experiences, responsibilities, and meanings (2013, 28, 44). One of the bases for his argument is that “there is nothing inevitable about the kinship of procreation” (2013, 5), or that of ‘nature’, because biogenetic substances do not only come from persons (biological parents), but may also come from places and their resources; because other elements such as nurture and memory are also essential to the production of kinship; and because procreation is not just about physical substance but also social status (2013, 4, 7, 8, 65). Given this, kinship is entirely cultural and what is understood as genealogical can also be made socially or culturally (2013, 2). Then, ‘mutuality of being’ blurs the line of differentiation between procreation (nature) and performance (culture) as bases of kinship (2013, 28). Indeed, “with procreation [follows] the meaning of participating in one another’s life” (2013, 29), which makes all means of kinship-making cultural. Sahlins thus disavowed all biological or natural bases of kinship.

However, Carsten (2013), commenting on Sahlins (2013), pointed out that ‘mutuality of being’ tends to focus on “a warm, fuzzy glow rather than a cold shiver” (Carsten 2013, 46) when kinship can actually carry “ambivalent or negative qualities” (Carsten 2013, 46). In this sense, the not-so-pretty things that “kinship *does* or enables” (2013:247; emphasis added) rather than what it *is* are also of significance, as kinship can ‘thin’ or ‘thicken’ through various natural–cultural registers such as feeding, procreating, co-habiting, and remembering in everyday experiences. This brings in a new dimension to consider — temporality. Temporality offers a way to explore the gradations of kinship rather than the extremes (such as ruptures or dissolution), since “it is in the gradual accumulation of everyday experiences through living together over time — in both the ritual and non-ritual moments — that kinship acquires its particular power” (2013, 248).

These works are all salient in the case of multispecies kinship between dogs and humans, as this kind of kinship lacks biogenetic or reproductive basis (at least not in the way in which human reproductive kinship occurs). Here, I am keen to return to Russell’s (2007) work that analysed “domestication as a form of kinship” (28), thereby extending kinship to other species through the reconsideration of both domestication and kinship. Contending that both concepts grapple with similar issues, Russell considered the enmeshed involvement of biological and social components and the blurring of their boundaries, practices of care and intimacy, and the involvement of power and domination involved in both kinship and domestication. Russell further argued that just as kinship was reframed through queer theory that validated “other kinds of families and relationships than those classically composing [often biology-based] kinship structures” (2007, 33) and through science studies that associated technologies that can create new kinds of kinship, multispecies kinship (or domestication) could not be reduced to solely biological or solely social foundation. In this project, I consider a particular question that Russell posed as a broad foundational starting point: “What are the effects of bringing animals into the family — on the animals, the kinship system, and the other members of the household?” (2007, 40).

As Haraway (2015) claimed, it is perhaps possible and productive to make kin not in the form of babies,³ and that making kin could “mean something other/more than entities tied by ancestry or genealogy” (161; also see Helmreich 2009 for ‘horizontal’ kinship among microbial organisms). Haraway contended that “kindest were not necessarily kin as family; making kin and making kind (as category, care, relatives without ties by birth, lateral relatives, lots of other echoes) stretch the imagination and can change the story” (2015, 161), and this stretch of imagination and speculation involved in making kin across the species boundaries is a focal point of this project, especially when these acts of speculation happen in the liminal spaces between established categories.

In order to pursue an avenue of inquiry pertaining to bodily engagements, perception, and affect as a form of embodied, experiential, imaginative, and musical language that can be internalised or externalised (see Ahmed 2004; Stewart 2007, 2011; Probyn 2010; Skoggard and Waterson 2015), I take seriously the body as “not a programmed machine but an active and open form, continually improvising its relation to things and to the world” (Abram 1996, 49) in this project. That is, the body as a responsive and responsible (able-to-respond) entity that is endlessly entangled with and attuning to the rhythms, tones, and textures of other bodies in its proximity — dogs, humans, things (see Abram 1996, 52–54; Haraway 2016). This is also aligned with Haraway’s (2003) approach to research(-with) dogs, who are here to live with, and not just to think with: they are fleshly beings with whom we discover and develop speculative, emergent, and responsible practices that produce and maintain our kinship.

Ingold’s (2010) work, which highlights “an ontology that assigns primacy to processes of formation as against their final products, and to flows and transformations of materials as against states of matter” (2010, 2–3), also informs how I envision and understand the fabric of everyday life woven by dogs, their humans, and their shared environments. Conceptualising entanglement as “not a network of connections but a *meshwork* of interwoven lines of growth and movement” (Ingold 2010, 3, emphasis added), I developed a particular appreciation for unintended but rich textures that form

³ This notion, while seemingly harmless and celebratory of non-reproductive futures and kinship, also harbours a lot of discomfort, as it tries to flatten unequal realities — when we consider birth rates of different nation states, the ones that ‘make babies’ tend to be currently poorer and formerly colonised nations. At the time of writing (2022), top ten countries with the highest birth rate in the world are all African nations (World Population Review 2022).

when “things *leak*, forever discharging through the surfaces that form temporarily around them” (Ingold 2010, 4), flowing, growing, and becoming through their evasion of static categorisations and classifications. Comparable to what Ingold called an “alchemical laboratory” (2010, 9), more-than-human kinship with dogs is a long-term and irreversible commitment that involves things and their thing-power (Bennett 2010).

Thinking and writing about multispecies kinship with dogs as beings with whom humans constitute each other through bodily relatings is one of those practices that this project aims to engage in. And the stakes are high, as “[w]e are at stake to each other” (Haraway 2016, 55). As Haraway (2003) wrote elsewhere, “Cohabitation, co-evolution, and embodied cross-species sociality ... might fruitfully inform livable politics and ontologies in current life worlds” (2003, 4). In other words, we cannot envision how to live a good life without thinking about how to live a good life with others, including our canine companions; “we become-with each other or not at all” (Haraway 2016, 4).

Here, Uexküll’s (1982) work provides an explanation for the ways in which we may become-with each other: Uexküll contended that multispecies relations are not just a product of mechanical interactions that take place among different species in a shared ecosystem, but also one of phenomenal/phenomenological interactions among bodies that have different motivations and intentions that intersect and manifest through the body that is specific to the individual, species, and environment as experienced by the body. Additionally, even though the *umwelt*, a sphere of semiotic significance experienced differently by different bodies and different species, may be inherently different, the ways in which perception and production of effect are reciprocal in structure (Uexküll 1982, 49), thereby forming a closed circuit that is always temporally and spatially bound (1982, 54).

The liminal spaces “between the subject’s perception signs and the object’s stimulus” (Uexküll 1982, 51) that are species-, time-, and space-specific are some of the focal points of this project, especially in the final (and experimental) chapter: I explore them as spaces that encourage imaginative speculations that lead to “situated emergence of more livable worlds [that] depends on that differential sensibility” (Haraway 2003, 51). Because making equivalents between humans and other species, or among any different species, can flatten the differences that exist between species and

their *umwelten*, I approach these differences with specificity in mind. Thus, I put Uexküll and Haraway in conversation here: as the *umwelten* of different beings cannot be the same, it is imperative to remember, “Not all animals are alike; their specificity — of kind and of individual — matter. The specificity of their happiness matters, and that is something that has to be brought to emergence” (Haraway 2003, 52).

However, it is important to note that multispecies kinship (or intraspecies kinship, for that matter) does not always elicit feelings of happiness, joy, or warmth. As it rests on contingent foundations, multispecies kinship between dogs and their humans inherits joint histories of the worlds that made this kind of kinship possible: (co-)evolution, domestication, and capitalism that shaped, and continue to shape, contemporary (and often hierarchical and exploitative) techno- and nature-cultures in which we live (Haraway 2003; Tuan 1984). In our “reaching into each other” (Haraway 2003, 6), dogs and humans have had to continuously figure out how to “fulfil the messy conditions of being in love” (2003, 35) in our shared worlds that can be dark and ugly at times, as some of the following chapters aim to demonstrate.

But multispecies kinship inherits joint futures, too (Haraway 2003). As dogs and humans become-with one another, as we seek to “inhabit an inter-subjective world that is about meeting the other in all the fleshly detail of a mortal relationship” (Haraway 2003, 34), and as we shift away from equating making babies to making kin, a different kind of future may open up: one that is not founded on reproductive futurism, where (human) children are no longer the focus of the politics of futures (Edelman 2004) and where sensibility (Weaver 2021) is foregrounded. Emphasising the fleshly specificities involved in the intricate dance that is multispecies kinship as inspired by Haraway, Edelman, and Uexküll, the project hopes to take one of its overarching and recurring themes — speculation — seriously as an emergent practice that queers the inherent uncertainty that permeates the future. In that, I ask, ‘what happens to the future (and not just the present) when kinship extends beyond the human domain?’ and ‘what alternative does multispecies kinship between dogs and their humans offer to the normative structures and practices taken for granted in intraspecies kinship?’

methodological groundings

I took my methodological inspiration from Anna Tsing (2015) and Kathleen Stewart (2011), approaching fieldwork as a sensory exercise in noticing the “rhythms, valences, moods, sensations, tempos, and lifespans” (Stewart 2011, 445). I heeded Tsing’s encouragement to learn to listen “even if we don’t yet know how to have a discussion” (254) — especially during the first lockdown in the UK — and told myself that ‘attune to the atmosphere’ was the ‘trust the process’ of ethnographic fieldwork. In the various methods I employed, including semi-structured ‘sit-down’ interviews (both in-person and virtual), unstructured walking interview (inspired largely by De Certeau (1984) who contended that walking produces and highlights possibilities in any given environment), longform questionnaire, social media and digital ethnography, and autoethnography, I foregrounded bodily, sensory, and affective phenomena captured in what Tsing calls “multispecies storytelling” (2015, x).

Taking storytelling seriously, Tsing also wrote, “To listen to and tell a rush of stories is a *method*” (2015, 37, original emphasis). The methodological power of stories is rooted in the detailed attention paid to the world around us with the recognition that stories are “site-specific, that is, attuned to indeterminate encounters and thus non-scalable” (221). This once again emphasised the significance of attuning to the atmosphere with all my senses, as no two encounters would be the same. Certainly, every possible fieldwork encounter is contingent upon the infinitely possible specificities in time and space. My ethnographic practice, then, hinges on learning to tell multispecies stories that demonstrate sensory attunement that operates in concert with specific contingencies that emerged in fieldwork.

These stories are also vessels containing and combining emotional forces that teach us some visceral things about what makes us human, for it takes vulnerability to open up to and to allow the everyday to affect us. Broadly, then, the research methods used in this project all focus on telling stories rich with meaning and inspiration to think differently — and with wonder, joy, hesitation, and even fear

— about mundane and often taken-for-granted concepts. I pay particular attention to the significance of emotions here: as affective knowledge produced and practised in entanglement with the world around us, emotions play an important role in understanding and challenging the norms that surround us. And emotions, especially in pandemic times, weren't in short supply during the fieldwork.

fieldwork itinerary

The fieldwork for this project took place for twelve months from October 2019 to September 2020, and it was inadvertently divided into two very different halves due to the COVID-19 pandemic that led to the nationwide lockdown in March 2020 in the UK. In the first quarter of the fieldwork, I spent most of my time scheduling and conducting interviews with individual research participants and building rapport as well as focusing on the snowball effect. I took to my existing social networks in-person and online (which actually overlapped quite a bit) for interviews, quick social media surveys, and digital ethnography.

I also contacted charities about potential volunteering opportunities at their organisations. Interviews took place both indoors and outdoors, and I had a chance to shadow one of my participants to her volunteering work at the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies on the Easter Bush campus of the University of Edinburgh, where I later became a volunteer myself toward the end of my fieldwork. Here, I connected with a few other people who later became my interviewees — one of whom works for a pet bereavement support service. The same participant that brought me along to the veterinary school also allowed me to tag along to a dog training class run by a Dogs Trust trainer, where I first had the chance to observe the affective atmospheres of group dog training.

I also started attending social events, including a 'friendsgiving' party hosted at a participant's home, Dogs Trust Christmas party, and a dog-friendly film screening at a small movie theatre during Christmastime. These events were as much a site of making new connections (mostly for in-depth interviews at a later date) as they were sites of ethnographic significance in themselves. When not at

events, I continued interviewing dog people around the city, some of whom had very specific circumstances involving their dog, such as a recent car accident or a dog bite accident. I developed interview plans that were individually and circumstantially specific (e.g., ‘how has the recovery process been since your dog was hit by a car?’) as well as standardised for all participants (e.g., ‘what breed is your dog, and did you choose that breed for a specific reason?’). Some of the interviewees also occupied a specific role vis-à-vis the dog, such as a dog behaviourist, a dog photographer and veterinary nurse, a dog trainer, an accountant-turned-dog-walker working toward becoming a dog trainer, and a dog shelter worker.

In addition to the ongoing interviews and events, I started doing more autoethnographic work in the second quarter of my fieldwork. Due to unusually harsh weather conditions that brought storm after storm in February 2020, a lot of my interviews, especially walking interviews, got cancelled. I focused on autoethnography and took an opportunity to dog-sit for a participant. And, just as I found a dog trainer who welcomed me into her classes to make regular observations, COVID-19 happened. With the first and strictest lockdown in March 2020, I gradually moved my fieldwork to take place almost entirely online. Virtual interviews replaced in-person ones, but because a lot of my participants were antsy and bored at home, they were very enthusiastic about having someone to speak to even if through a digitally mediated means, especially about their canine companions. I also spent more time online collecting data on digital cultures through visual artefacts (such as Instagram posts, stories, and memes), observing interpersonal interactions on social media platforms, and following my existing participants’ digital lives, mostly on Instagram due to its popularity among dog people.

The month of March was an adjustment period for all, especially in terms of the change in the pace of life due to the lockdown: it felt like years. But April and May somehow seemed to pass by in seconds, perhaps partially attributable to the newly habituated and monotonous rhythms in the pandemic, and partially to a dip in my mental health that led to my being asleep for more than usual. But I managed to continue conducting virtual interviews and ventured further into the sphere of social media throughout April, May, and June 2020. As the government-issued regulations eased for outdoor meetings of small groups of people, I started to cautiously venture outside to observe

dog people on their walks as well as to do autoethnographic work with Frank. And as people adapted to the virtual way of doing things, dog experts, such as trainers and veterinarians, started hosting livestreamed events on various social media platforms, which I sat in on from my living room.

By July 2020, regular dog training classes returned, albeit virtually. The sessions I was invited mostly to observe (but also participate in, to some extent) involved three internationally adopted dogs who were all adopted on the same day via different rescues. August and September were spent wrapping up my fieldwork, which mostly involved follow-up interviews and last-minute interviews as well as continuing with making observations in public and autoethnographic work. However, I also continued the fieldwork part-time during the early stages of writing up until early December 2020, volunteering at the University of Edinburgh's veterinary school as a simulated client for first- and second-year veterinary students.

urban multispecies time-space

I've heard many renditions of "so much of fieldwork is just waiting" from anthropologists who were in the post-fieldwork stage of their research projects when I was gearing up to start the fieldwork. And indeed, I have had to wait for a response from a potential participant now and then, or for specific events to take place. But — and this is something I think is the magic of multispecies approach to (auto)ethnographic research — with Frank, I never spent too much time waiting. It was as if he made the environment teem with potential avenues of research: anywhere from the local park for a walk around the block to our favourite dog-friendly pubs and cafés, Frank created research opportunities wherever his hairy toes, led by his wet nose, ventured, even in the quietest times in the most residential neighbourhoods of Edinburgh.

Indeed, quite a lot of my fieldwork entailed immersing myself in Edinburgh through one of the most mundane and routine things that Frank and I did every single day, no matter the weather: to go for a walk. We explored different neighbourhoods of Edinburgh on foot, often walking to places nearby or to well-known dog-friendly locales around the city. Walking with Frank proved to be one

of the most energising features in the fieldwork as well, as it gave rise to so many unforeseen possibilities: strangers came up to say hello to Frank, some of whom agreed to a chat about dogs for a while even at a moment's notice. When Frank stopped to say hello to other dogs, I got a chance to strike up a conversation with the dog's human about their dogs, even for a short time and in passing during a walk. Even when he attracted 'negative' attention by showing his reactive tendencies toward motorbikes and certain single-decker buses, he created moments charged with various senses from people and dogs around us, moments loaded with ethnographic significance. These 'flash' snippets from fieldwork regularly revealed new contours of dog culture in Edinburgh, precipitating new and often unexpected ways of thinking about and through multispecies kinship between dogs and their humans in the city.

Our most regular walk around the block in our neighbourhood in Morningside (known as the 'posh part of town') takes place twice a day for about twenty to thirty minutes each. These walks also led to some routine regularities that had a structuring effect in my fieldwork experiences. Going through the park across the street every day became something quite precious in terms of data collection, because I got to know our neighbours and their dogs through this daily activity. Many of them participated in the research in varying capacities, ranging from agreeing to be observed and written about to sitting down with me for multiple in-depth interviews. This repetitive nature of running into the same people on a regular basis was especially grounding given the sense of hurriedness I experienced in conducting fieldwork in an urban setting where unpredictability in participant schedules and scarcity in participant availabilities (due to work or other competing items on the agenda) were common.

On warmer, sunnier, and drier days, many dog neighbours gathered at the benches in this local park to chat as their dogs played, and thanks to Frank showing his own interest, I had an obvious reason to join in. And because a lot of us had at least partially overlapping walking routes, some of the conversations I had with them turned inadvertently into short walking interviews. The conversations that I have had with them regularly inspired me to investigate dog- and kinship-related concepts and themes further; as I learned to notice growths and changes in behaviours, attitudes, and senses, I started to see with more clarity the different aspects of multispecies kinship in everyday action.

the fieldsite: Edinburgh, Scotland

Drawing on archaeological data from as far back as the Neolithic Age, archaeozoologist Catherine Smith argued that a ‘pet’ may be defined as an animal “allowed into the home” (2006, 581) and is “given a personal name”. And in the 21st century Scotland, Smith argued that people also “tend to consider as pets those animals on which particular affection is bestowed” (2006, 582). But this is not to say that pet-keeping culture simply ‘evolved’ from loving nonhuman animals less in the past to loving them more now. For example, in the medieval times, influential thinkers like Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) pronounced that nonhuman animals didn’t have ‘immortal souls’, which justified the treatment of nonhuman animals as disposable entities by humans. But at the same time, archaeological and historical evidence from the same period suggests pet-keeping of dogs as a popular practice among wealthy women, including Mary, Queen of Scots (2006, 585). Cultural thoughts and practices surrounding the dog often operated with paradox and contradiction in this way, and I will later be arguing that we see similar paradoxes and contradictions in the dog culture of contemporary Edinburgh.

In the Victorian era (1837-1901), the attitude toward pet keeping started shifting toward sentimentality and love, but the kind that was compatible with eugenics-like control (Ritvo 1989; Smith 2006). Historian Harriet Ritvo wrote that the Victorian era was a time that saw burgeoning dog culture and love of dogs as pets rather than working animals, especially in the form of dog breeding. However, contending that dog breeds and human social and moral status were intersubjectively implicated in one another, Ritvo also demonstrated that stratified leisure activities such as animal breeding served as “a valuable index of social status” (1986, 229), especially in terms of distinct (middle) class status. Additionally, “the tendency ... of comfortable urban households to cherish dogs that were not required to earn their keep” (*ibid.*) allowed breeding standards to be “unrelated to practical function” (*ibid.*), paving the way for pedigree dog breeds to be developed almost entirely for “the pleasure of ... admirers” (Ritvo 1989, 113). As such, the “desire and ability to manipulate, rather than to produce animals that could be measured by such extrinsic standards as

utility, beauty, or vigor” (Ritvo 1989, 115) were celebrated among dog fanciers. Selective breeding — which shares uncomfortable principles with eugenic practices where genetic diversity of a population is seen as insignificant or even as something to minimise in the name of ‘purity’ or ‘pedigree’ — thus became the standard practice of (re)producing dogs.

But I would be remiss if I didn’t mention, as counterexample to the rather grotesque breeding practices, *the* famous dog of Edinburgh who lived in this era, one who perhaps epitomised the Victorian sentimentality toward dogs: the 19th century Greyfriars Bobby, a Skye terrier who was the pet dog of John Gray, a policeman in the city. Bobby is known for keeping watch at Greyfriars Kirkyard after John Gray’s death in 1858, and there is a statue commemorating the dog on Candlemaker Row just outside of the cemetery. Today, Bobby’s story and statue still attract tourists whose touches have worn the nose of the statue shiny even after the statue was restored to fix the nose that was polished in the same way (BBC 2014).

By the 20th century, dogs were kept primarily as pets in Scotland by working class people as well (rather than as full-time working animals), and in the current 21st century, dogs (and cats) are increasingly becoming substitutes for human children (Smith 2006, 587, 593). Given this history, it is perhaps no surprise at all that Edinburgh is an extremely — and I mean *extremely* — dog-friendly city. As one of my participants, Willa, a white American woman in her early 30s, said to me once, “*everybody* has a dog here”. This, while an exaggeration, did not seem too far from reality either; in certain green spaces, especially on warmer, drier days, it indeed seemed as though everybody visiting these locations had a dog. According to Dugs Welcome, a website that serves as a dog-friendly guide to different British cities, Edinburgh boasts almost 500 self-claimed dog-friendly businesses across the city, the highest number in not only Scotland, but all of the UK (Dugs Welcome 2021). The types of dog-friendly businesses varied with quite a range, too, from cafés, bars, and restaurants to department stores and clothing shops, from hairdressers to furniture stores, from sports centres to bike shops. This meant that dogs were not only popular as a companion animal in Edinburgh, but they were also more deeply embedded into the nooks and crannies of everyday human life here.

The dog-friendliness of Edinburgh unsurprisingly had a big impact on my autoethnographic practice as well. Frank and I never had this kind of opportunity before — to walk into a café or a pub together, and even to go clothes shopping together. But with Edinburgh's openness to sharing spaces with dogs, I was able to take Frank most places, which added on to the already infinite ethnographic possibilities that stemmed from being out and about in the world. As Frank started accompanying me to cafés when I needed a change of scenery, pubs when I craved a gin and tonic on a warm summer's evening, and all the green spaces available in the city so that we could both stretch our legs, he became more integrated into not just my everyday life, but my ethnographic work for this project.

However, the dog-friendliness of the city was not the only reason I chose Edinburgh as my field site. It was not until I moved to Edinburgh that I realised just how much being from Toronto led me to take for granted its metropolitan racial and ethnic diversity. I was spoiled with the comfort of inconspicuousness Toronto offered, blending into the multiracial mosaic of Toronto: with visible minorities making up more than half of the city's population, I wasn't anything out of the ordinary. I often went about my day without anyone staring at me or being confused for another East Asian person. But when I traded the screeching blue jays and freezing cold winters for cooing wood pigeons and dreary rain, it seemed that I also traded this comfortable feeling of blending into the norm for sticking out like a sore thumb. My first impression of Edinburgh when I moved here in August 2018 was that it was very white. My impression of Edinburgh today, over three years later, is that it is still very white, although I have seen a noticeable increase in the frequency at which I encountered other visibly minoritised people. In this way, Edinburgh was distinctly unlike much of the fieldsites I read about throughout my training as an anthropologist. After all, the dominant attitudes and canonised literature in anthropology reflected the discipline's colonial past, which manifested and was experienced as 'whiteness' — that is, whiteness has been the operative norm of anthropology that dichotomised white and non-white as analogous to the researcher and the researched, respectively (Han 2021).

It was a deliberate, and maybe slightly vindictive, decision on my part, then, to choose Edinburgh as my field site partially because of its whiteness. As a racialised person in a predominantly white place,

I occupied an interesting positional niche, especially for conducting research in a discipline in which people of colour were often discouraged from studying white people in a variety of ways. Indeed, research methods courses rarely sat well with me when it came to the discussion of positionality and reflexivity, because the researcher was often construed as a person in a position of power, especially over the researched, or the research participants. As I have argued elsewhere (2021), this was grounded in the implicit assumption that anthropological/ethnographic researchers are straight, able-bodied, white men who tend to have set the standards of disciplinary norms.

My gaze toward whiteness is perhaps a bit of an unorthodox one in the discipline, but one that I think achieves something that I've always liked about anthropology: making the familiar strange, and the strange familiar. Whiteness has always been both familiar *and* strange to me. It was something I've resisted against harder than anything, yet also something I've wanted more than anything for myself in the past. Being surrounded by it for an extended amount of time in Edinburgh has not only accustomed me to it, but it also made me form a weird kind of relationship with it. I've learned to feel relatively comfortable and familiar with it, but never entirely, for it could poke and prod me in unexpected ways, lest I forget my difference and distance from it. It is no surprise, then, that my relationship to whiteness, even when it is not foregrounded explicitly, runs through the entire dissertation. But as it turned out, difference and distance allowed me to really see — as if the field site were an impressionist painting from which I needed to zoom out first to understand the shapes.

I also chose to focus largely on middle-class white people and their dogs. Historian Michael Fry (2010) wrote that since 2004 when Edinburgh was recognised as the world's first 'city of literature', there was a revival of letters that was followed by a "revival in life" (2010, 383). As Fry recounted, Edinburgh "flaunted its wealth as it had never cared or dared to do in the past, in the shops and on the streets, in the bars and in the restaurants, in the clothes that were worn and in the cars that were driven" (383) — and I would argue, in addition, perhaps in the dogs that people kept as well. This is not to say that Edinburgh is a middle-class utopia, however: *Trainspotting* (1993) depicts Edinburgh

of the 1980s during the HIV/AIDS epidemic as “the city of junkies” (Fry 2010, 385), and currently, Leith, the part of Edinburgh that was featured in *Trainspotting*, is still being gentrified today.⁴

Studying middle-class dog people and their more-than-human lives anthropologically, then, challenges the discipline’s tendency to look toward suffering and poverty for meaning. I align with Robbins (2013) who outlined some “emerging topics of anthropological concern” (457), such as “value, morality, imagination, well-being, empathy, care, the gift, hope, time and change” (457) in a time that seems to be wounded with, but also desensitised to, brutal trauma and suffering. Robbins called it ‘an anthropology of the good’, concerned with “the cultural construction of the good” (457), “how people work to create the good in social relationships” (458), and “the ways people come to believe that they can successfully create a good beyond what is presently given in their lives” (458). I keep these tenets of ‘anthropology of the good’ in mind as I explore, very broadly speaking, how humans and their nonhuman kin create not only shared but also affectively significant lives with one another.

Furthermore, studying middle-classness, an often taken-for-granted norm in the world of academic anthropology, is similar, or partially analogous, to studying white people anthropologically, in that it challenges the discipline’s assumptions about the identity of the researcher and that of the researched. Taking Nader’s (1972) suggestion to ‘study up’ cautiously,⁵ I wish to challenge the discipline’s tendency to study the underdog and the downtrodden, often also thought of as people who existed geographically far away from where anthropologists — most of whom I have encountered are white and middle-class — called home. Additionally, I do not take lightly my own middle-classness as a lens through which I understand my field site. Having had an upper-middle-class childhood, and, post-immigration, a largely middle-class adolescence and adulthood, I have often found a sense of normalcy and comfort in middle-classness in my life. However, being a

⁴ Some of the other areas of Edinburgh that suffer from deprivation — in terms of income, employment, health, education, access to services, crime, and housing — are mostly situated in the North/East of the city (which includes Leith), including Craigenfinny/Duddingston, and Portobello/Craigmillar (City of Edinburgh Council 2020).

⁵ While I agree with the sentiment and rationale behind the term ‘studying up’, I avoid using it, as I think it can reify and normalise vertical hierarchies as ‘the way the world is’ rather than challenging the view that there is an inherent (and perhaps too simplistic) ‘upward’ and ‘downward’ in conceptualising power dynamics.

racialised *and* middle-class woman in a predominantly white and middle-class place made me consider and re-consider this question that Ahmed posed: “How do emotions work to align some subjects with some others and against other others?” (2004b, 117). Indeed, *habitus* (Bourdieu 1984), the physical embodiment of one’s capital, manifests in emotional expressions, which are influenced by both race *and* class.

Taking the anthropological claim to ‘make the strange familiar, and the familiar strange’ seriously, then, I particularly hope to do the latter (making the familiarity of middle-classness among anthropologists ‘strange’) in this dissertation by carefully reflecting on and grounding the ethical dimensions of my fieldwork on the micropolitics of my work, my choice of methods, and my positionality vis-à-vis the human participants involved in my research. In this way, I hope to pose questions to upset the underlying assumptions about power that pervade institutionalised anthropological research.

digital ethnography: viral/digital

At least half of the fieldwork involved in this research project took place in an unexpectedly turbulent, but also in many ways, interesting time for ethnographic research. The implementation of various governmental restrictions and institutional regulations came about hurriedly due to COVID-19 which led to the ongoing pandemic, changing the way of life in Edinburgh at the midpoint of my fieldwork in March 2020. Today, over two years later, the pandemic continues to affect and shape the everyday ways in which people are allowed to, or feel safe to, exist with one another in shared spaces.

When the viral pandemic — which felt like a thing of dystopian science fiction — entered the field site as an unforeseen obstacle in my fieldwork, all planned research activities came to a screeching halt for a little while. As per government guidelines and for the safety of myself as well as everybody else, I paused my in-person fieldwork in late March 2020. However, I was lucky and grateful to have retained online connections to a few people from meetups that I have gone to pre-pandemic, and to

have the community that organised these meetups remain quite active in various social media spaces on the internet even, or maybe *especially*, during the pandemic. I kept in touch with people that I met from these meetups and started making new connections with other members on Facebook and Instagram, two platforms that the community used to host its digital members. Facebook was often used as a hub for all the members to socialise via photos, videos, and text, or to plan events, while Instagram was used as a way to keep in touch with individual members one-on-one through their own (dog's) profile. Thus was my slightly rushed but relatively smooth transition into digital ethnography.

At first, I 'lurked',⁶ looking for memes that might spark new thoughts, interesting conversations that could be the start of new thematic threads to trace, virtual events that reflected the larger cultural, social, and political trends and insights surrounding multispecies kinship between dogs and their humans (especially with the pandemic thrown in the mix), as well as animal welfare in the pandemic times. I then posed questions and prompts on different social media platforms such as Nextdoor, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, looking for humans and dogs to participate in my research in varying capacities. The kinds of participation ranged from allowing me to use their photographs and captions to agreeing to a socially distanced walking interview in the rain and more. In fact, I made first contact with most of my interviewees on the internet and continued to keep in touch with many of them digitally in both viral and non-viral stages of my fieldwork. For example, a dog trainer who I initially met on Facebook kindly offered to allow me to observe her puppy and rescue training classes for this project. While the pandemic forced her dog training business into a short hiatus, we kept in touch online, both via direct and private messages to one another and via livestream events she hosted for her existing clients free of charge, until she started offering classes via Zoom, a video conferencing software that entered many of our professional lives during the pandemic.

But even when the initial panic of the first lockdown eased a little in May 2020, many of my participants — and also myself — started settling into the 'new normal' of (not always well practised) social-distancing, mask-wearing, hand-sanitising, and sometimes even elbow-bumping

⁶ Lurking refers to the activity of observing the happenings and contents passively without leaving any marks of engagement with (participating in) the happenings and contents.

instead of hand-shaking. For this reason, I decided to keep the vast majority of my fieldwork activities to the digital fieldsite even if meeting outdoors was allowed according to the ever-updating government regulations. This decision was based largely on the public health concerns of COVID-19 safety as well as the need for self-preservation from both the viral pandemic (especially before the vaccinations started) and increased anti-Asian sentiments worldwide as well as in my immediate surroundings that led to some serious agoraphobic tendencies on my part. However, I quickly realised that digital ethnography was not only a viable option in pandemic times, but also a genuinely interesting method to employ, especially in an increasingly digital, or ‘post-internet’ world.

Feeling increasingly comfortable and confident living and working in the digital sphere, I engaged and experimented with different digital methods, including posting short, open-ended questionnaires that people could respond to online; engaging with Instagram stories (audio-visual contents shared via one’s profile, but only made available for 24 hours) to keep up-to-date with people and their dogs’ lives during the pandemic by regularly checking for any new content on my feed; ‘dm-ing’ (direct messaging) for private conversations; and attending virtual events hosted by canine experts and participating in the Q&A’s. These activities were just as informative as in-person ethnography, and in such novel ways. The data I collected from these digital activities were both different from, and at the same time similar to, my pre-pandemic data in content and form in many ways, perhaps highlighting omnipresent and rampant ambiguities in the pandemic times. But given the incredibly and progressively large role that the internet played in people’s lives — especially as the pandemic continues to evade human grasp with its multiple variants — I find myself advocating for digital ethnography to stay as a valid and interesting way to conduct fieldwork, in viral times and beyond.

Doing digital ethnography also debunked some of my own preconceived notions about conducting anthropological fieldwork, digital or in-person. As de Seta (2020) discussed, there are three lies of digital ethnography that involves three archetypes: “the ‘network field-weaver’, the ‘eager participant-lurker’, and the ‘expert fabricator’” (2020, 80). I learned throughout my fieldwork that

doing digital ethnography involves cutting just as much as weaving and connecting, withdrawing as much as participating, and patching as much as fabricating.

My decision to call this phase of my fieldwork ‘viral’ is a deliberate one that has many layers. Most obviously, the pandemic that shifted my fieldwork plans was caused by the COVID-19 virus. But as fieldwork moved online, I found myself surrounded by ‘viral’ content: digital materials that spread rapidly through the expansively connected gossamer that is the internet. These materials are experienced (seen and heard), shared, reacted to, and commented on, often growing in their presence until the next big thing comes along. The active lifecycle of viral materials is relatively short (perhaps the 24-hour news cycle is to blame in part), but their presence on the internet, and also in internet users’ psyches, remains for a very long time.

‘Digital’ is also a word that requires some examination here. The word literally means ‘finger-like’, or ‘pertaining to the finger’, from the Latin word ‘digitus’, which means finger (or toe, too, which coincidentally makes the term quite multispecies-friendly). Fingers are spreading, stretching, touching, feeling, magical things that have, in many ways, allowed humans to evolve the way we have — archaeological evidence suggests that the opposable thumb, for example, played a huge role in dexterous object manipulation and toolmaking (Handwerk 2021). Fast-forward a couple million years to the COVID-19 pandemic in the 2020s, these fingers are allowing for behavioural and cultural changes that may have unexpected evolutionary consequences generations from now: mask-wearing, hand-sanitising, and QR-code-scanning are just a few examples of pandemic-specific everyday activities that require the metacarpal digits.

It is perhaps apt, then, that these viral times ushered in a digital era like no other. In the pandemic, we have been relying on the internet more than ever — to access paperless menus, to shop online, to teach and to learn, to connect to our loved ones, and even to just spend some mindless time while scrolling down social media feeds to get away from the painful realities. In the age of COVID-19, digital lives, literally at our fingertips through various technological devices, have become quite inseparable from *real* lives.

Even before the pandemic, however, social media made for a very powerful tool in dog research, given the contemporary popularity of dog content in the online datasphere. My decision to conduct digital ethnographic fieldwork was not born out of pandemic necessity; it was initially based on my familiarity with, and my love of, what I'll call the 'doggosphere' — a dispersed but largely anglophone-centric sphere of dog-related content and data on the internet that pervade dog people's everyday lives. 'Living on the internet' was indeed a remarkably effective way to observe people's everyday lives. It allowed me — both as an introverted homebody who was enthused to scroll through pages upon pages of and as a field researcher caught in an unexpected and unprecedented pandemic — to participate in and observe a whole different world that was so strangely similar to, yet drastically different from, the physical city of Edinburgh.

the participants

One Scotland-based dog community on Instagram was particularly helpful in contributing the so-called 'snowball effect', especially during the pre-viral phase of the fieldwork. I had been a member of this community for a year or so prior to the start of the fieldwork through Frank's Instagram account and had made connections with some members with whom I regularly kept in touch both online and at in-person meet-ups at various locations in Edinburgh throughout the year. The meet-ups were organised by this community for the purpose of fun socialisation for both dogs and their humans, often taking place in well-known dog-friendly places around Edinburgh, including the Hermitage of Braids, a beautiful forested trail connected to Blackford Hill featuring many different walking paths; Portobello Beach, where the promenade bustled with dogs, pedestrians, skateboarders, strollers, joggers, bikes, during the summer, but became the coldest, windiest, and dreariest part of the city in the winter; and Holyrood Park, which boasted the touristy Arthur's Seat as well as many soggy dogs in swampy seasons. These meet-ups were opportune, though at times chaotic and difficult, places for participant-observations. Multiple participants — both human and canine — created multiple threads of conversations and atmospheres, often presenting an all-you-can-observe buffet of options for me to follow and participate in. It was also through members of this community that I was able to attend events like a charity-hosted Christmas party at a

community centre/sports club and access spaces like dog training classes and veterinary school classrooms.

My research participants for this project were chosen for various reasons, ranging from availability and enthusiasm for research and practical expertise. I met many of my participants, both human and canine, through public observation, too. There were countless dogs and stranger humans at various popular locales, such as Holyrood Park and Arthur's Seat, the Braids and Blackford Hill, Water of Leith, West Granton Park, Portobello Beach, the Meadows, Craiglockhart, and more. I often went to these spots around the city with Frank and sat down with my fieldwork notebook, trusty pen, and smartphone and wrote down any dog-related occurrences that caught my attention. The observations from these very public places almost always sparked interesting thoughts and questions around nature–culture, economies/ecologies, race and whiteness, and multispecies kinship, which in turn formed the broad themes of speculative imagination and liminality through which I think about my ethnographic data.

While a few of these initially publicly observed people and dogs did agree to interviews now and then, most of my interviewees were recruited from existing networks and through social media platforms, as I mentioned previously. I interviewed 47 humans and their 48 dogs, many in-person (sitting down or walking), some via synchronous chat or text, some via phone or video call. The relationship that most of the human participants had with their dogs was as pets, or companion animals, as opposed to working or service dogs, show dogs, or breeding stock. In other words, most of the dogs were brought into human homes for the sole purpose of (hopefully) joyful companionship.

A handful of my human participants were dog professionals, including a veterinary student who has since graduated and become a practicing veterinarian, dog trainers (private and charity), dog behaviourist who also worked with service dogs being trained for disabled people, dog walkers, dog groomer, and a dog boutique owner. All bar two (funnily, a dog trainer and a dog walker) had dogs of their own, too. From speaking to them, I started to be curious about how expert knowledge about dogs gets translated into daily praxis.

By a strange coincidence and not by design at all, most of my human participants were women. As one of my participants has put it, “It’s man’s best friend, isn’t it? So, when did it swap to be girl’s best friend?” However, gender is not something that I discuss explicitly or in depth in this project. The anthropological conversation around nature–cultures has often revolved around gender, but what I wish to do in this project is more concerned with species as a category that continuously contests the boundaries and shapes of, and similarities and differences between, ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ (see MacCormack and Strathern 1980). While gendered terms, such as ‘mother’ or ‘mum’ and ‘dad’ or ‘daddy’, did make appearances throughout the fieldwork, these terms were used to signify people’s roles as parents (or ‘pawrents’ — combining ‘paw’ and ‘parent’ — who happened to be gendered people) rather than to highlight the gendered roles of the people with regard to their dogs.

ethical considerations

Working with nonhuman animals, I took more-than-human ethics seriously throughout the research. I first acknowledge that research involving nonhuman animals could be considered inherently problematic given that they normally cannot communicate in verbal or written forms to human researchers. However, to minimise even the slightest risk of harm, all the parts of my research that pertained directly to my canine participants were completely non-invasive (other than feeding them treats with their humans’ approval and permission). Prioritising impact over intent, I also strived to respond to canine bodily cues to the best of my ability in order to reduce any undue distress I could cause.

For example, I did not approach dogs when they showed signs of fear or anxiety, such as backing away, growling, or putting their tail between their back legs. I was careful not to raise my voice unexpectedly in their presence, because noise-sensitive dogs (including my own dog, Frank) could be frightened by this, leading to unexpected and potentially negative or aggressive behaviours. Similarly, I made sure not to make sudden movements that could be misinterpreted as a threat, such as raising my arms in a hitting or swinging motion or moving my legs in a kicking motion. I reviewed animal

behaviour and veterinary literature and spoke to canine behaviour specialists to gain a fuller understanding of dog behaviour to continue to inform my behaviour around my canine participants. I also attained verbal or written consent from the dogs' humans with the understanding that the humans who are responsible for the dogs would be the people who knew the dogs best (which I discuss at length in the first chapter).

As for the human participants, I have only interacted with consenting adults who were made aware that they could withdraw their consent at any time. I recorded the information that my human participants shared with me only with prior and explicit permission, given either verbally or in writing. In digital spaces, I followed the content redistribution guidelines on specific platforms (for example, Twitter grants "permission to academic researchers sharing Tweet IDs and User IDs for non-commercial research purposes" (Twitter 2020), arguing in their privacy policy that content posted on Twitter is made public, thus available for public usage. In any case, I still opted to obtain individual users' explicit permissions, because, as Fiesler and Proferes argued in their exploratory study, "the majority of Twitter users in our study do not realize that researchers make use of tweets, and a majority also believe researchers should not be able to do so without permission" (2018, 2). Because Instagram did not have explicit stipulations about whether people could use content on the platform for academic research purposes, I obtained explicit permission from individual users, either via comment or direct messages (DM). Below are some screenshots demonstrating how consent was obtained during my digital fieldwork on Twitter and Instagram.



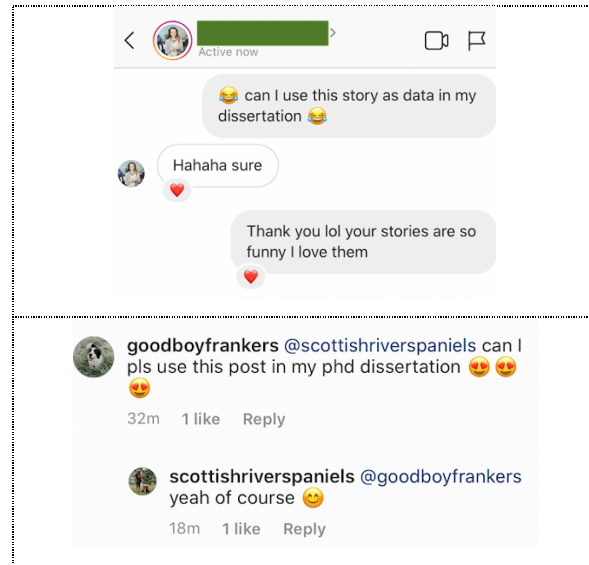


fig. 1 – examples of digital consent acquisition

On Facebook, I only drew from public data — data that any Facebook user, researcher or not, could access — and made sure to anonymise everybody’s name. I also used some screenshots I took from now-deleted or archived posts, which makes tracing of information or identity impossible. It was akin to making observations in public in-person: a fleeting set of interactions often among strangers happening real-time, events unfolding before my eyes with countless fingertips typing on phones, tablets, and computers on the other ends of my screen until the posts and comments were deleted (for whatever reason). Simply put, if you missed the interactions happening live, there was no record to refer to. Even then, I still anonymised every name that appeared in the data that were collected, again treating these online interactions like public observations made in-person where the descriptions of people or the dogs omitted any piece of information that can lead to their identification.

The following chapters explore distinct topics and questions surrounding multispecies kinship between dogs and their humans in Edinburgh and on the internet. Here, I provide an itinerary of sorts for the ethnographic venture ahead.

The first chapter, *knowing about dogs*, asks broad questions about the epistemological practices foundational to multispecies kinmaking between dogs and humans: how do people produce knowledge about (their) dogs? and how are these knowledges utilised in their everyday lives? These questions consider a multitude of deep-rooted and established categories and classifications used and normalised by my human participants, such as ‘breed’, ‘species’, and ‘rescue’. But the categories are neither deterministic nor determined here: they mix, collide, conflict, and leave gaps, highlighting the differences inherent in our species- and body-specific ways in which organisms exist and experience in their environments/worlds (*umwelt*). For my human participants, all of whom *knew* things about their dogs as well as dogs as a species, producing knowledge about a dog’s *umwelt*, despite its differences from human *umwelt*, was a task that required making merographic connections across the different canine categories as well as the sensibility to take the body seriously as a site of knowledge production. Both modes of knowledge production required intersubjective speculation — an imaginative practice that is central to multispecies kinship — about the things that as humans, we just cannot know for certain about dogs. I suggest that making merographic connections and using sensibilities are both vital practices for flourishing multispecies kinship that could thrive in our continuous attempt to imagine, through our material bodies, between and within the inevitable gaps in knowledge.

No future for dog children, the following chapter, investigates the myriad ways in which dogs are like and unlike human children. The examination of similarities and differences between children of different species aims to evoke both normative and uncomfortable emotions and expectations associated with ‘childhood’: warm love glowing from the depths of one’s heart, tenderness toward an innocent child who needs care, explosive joy in moments that make their marks on one’s memory, as well as the dread of mortality that coexists with the death drive, a generational rift under the pressure

of the image of the future that ironically longs for the past, and the cruelly fine line between care and control. I ask what happens to the future when dogs become children, pondering non-reproductive, non-futuristic futures that relish in multispecies present.

Managing kinship with more-than-human economies, the next chapter, traces the connections between different kinds of economies produced in and influenced by multispecies kinship by attending to economic practices involved in caring for a dog. Urging to ‘stay with the trouble’ of multispecies kinship, I show the entangled nature of these economies, and how the entanglement of these economies is navigated, negotiated, and justified by my human participants on both offline and online worlds. I make connections between ordinary objects and materials (such as dog food, treats, toys, and (luxury) accessories) and routine practices that are important to my participants’ multispecies kinship with their dogs (like regular training, medical care provision, and engagements on social media). By illustrating the complex combination of economies involved in the management and maintenance of the larger capitalist logics that underpin these materials and practices, I show some of the ways in which contemporary multispecies kinship involves multiple economies that are often imbricated in conflicting and uncomfortable ways, perhaps reflecting the discomforts involved in the ongoing mutual domestication of dogs and humans.

The following chapter, *multispecies kinship as a technology of exclusion*, primarily examines the relationship between love of dogs (and other nonhuman animals) and whiteness online, following contentious digital material, and the ensuing burst of online encounters that sparked rage, grief, fear, whose trace quickly disappeared (much like undocumented offline encounters that if one misses, are gone). The experiences of this moment, involving untraceable strangers (much like public observation), were moderated by the blue-light-emitting screens that I was glued to more than ever during my digital fieldwork. These encounters illuminated the intersections and compatibilities between love of dogs (and nonhuman animals in general) and white supremacy, between inclusion of one and exclusion of another. I aim to situate these digital encounters in the larger historical trajectories of white supremacist racism that is at once about humanity and about animality, and digital spaces as an ideal breeding ground for far-right ideologies. Collapsing the dichotomised differentiation between humanity and animality, I end the chapter with a glimmer of hope in

finding ways to dismantle the false binaries produced and normalised in upholding racial orders and hierarchies.

More-than-human kinship against proximal loneliness is largely an autoethnographic essay that theorises a specific kind of loneliness — *proximal* loneliness — that was especially prevalent during the first nationwide lockdown in the UK that was implemented as an urgent COVID-19 pandemic response.⁷ Thinking about what kinds of implication the lack of human interaction has on multispecies kinship as well as the concept of loneliness, I theorised that the loneliness that pervaded the first lockdown that prohibited most kinds of human-to-human interactions that so many of us (myself included) took for granted is unlike some other types of loneliness that have previously been studied. It was an embodied kind of loneliness that stemmed from the lack of shared rhythms, routines, and habits — the kinds of things that depend largely on proximity to develop and sustain. Drawing from my lockdown experience with Frank, I show some of the ways in which multispecies kinship and its mundane emergent practices that adapt to changing contexts could alleviate feelings of proximal loneliness.

The final essay chapter, *creative ecologies of multispecies kinship*, paints a picture (or a musical score) of the rhythms and valences of the everyday routines and movements that dogs and their humans share. Experimental in its symphonic form, the chapter foregrounds the liminal present that is always sandwiched between the extant past and the future that does not exist yet, but constantly feels within grasp. Yet, in this liminal space, the *evasive present*, my participants and I were able to become-with one another through bodily and symbolic engagements. The four-part essay is a creative practice that etches melodies, harmonies, cacophonies, and rhythms of everyday multispecies lives on paper (or screen), normalising messiness, imperfections, and mistakes as ordinary multispecies practices that form some of the many strands of threads holding the tapestries of multispecies kinship together.

Each of these chapters are interspersed by shorter, more visually focused photo essay chapters. These photo essays are a playful demonstration of liminal spaces as productive sites that brim with concepts

⁷ A version of this chapter was published as ‘More-than-human kinship against proximal loneliness: practising emergent multispecies care with a dog in a pandemic and beyond’ in *Feminist Theory* (Han 2022).

and stories that refuse strict categorisation and classification. They are somewhat mythical in nature as well, illustrating the magical in the mundane made possible by the art of imagination. They reveal the affective forces that dogs possess and the speculative abilities that humans exercised, both continuously in circuit with one another, being perceived, interpreted, and reacted to through, and despite, our different *umwelten*. I also hope to — once again following in Tsing's steps — take storytelling seriously as an ethnographic method, and to explore the different, non-textual, and creative possibilities of ethnographic expression, especially beyond the format expected of a doctoral dissertation.

Lastly, the conclusion aims to bring together some of the broader themes that emerge throughout the dissertation: liminality and speculation that proliferate in multispecies kinship between dogs and their humans in Edinburgh and on the internet. There, I share some final musings and insights through the recapitulation of the chapters, what they each explored, and their thematic commonalities and connections.

Ben

His pointy ears are feathered with soft champagne hair, moving like antennae every which way. His deep, dark eyes can stare into your soul. But for such a poised and photogenic dog, Ben can be surprisingly playful and derpy.⁸ When we first met in late November 2019, he crawled under a coffee table at the pub while following his curious nose and got stuck. He couldn't contain his excitement when Frank approached him to play.



fig. 2 – soulful Ben



derpy Ben (with Frank)

⁸ 'Derpy', a very popular adjective in the doggo language (an anglophone dialectal language popular among dog people on the internet), means awkward yet hilarious, foolish yet loveable. It can be used to describe facial expressions or personalities.

He is a chatty dog, too, especially when he yawns — ‘*ruh-ruh-ruh*’, which can vaguely sound like and therefore was interpreted as “I love you” by Grace and Jacob, Ben’s humans. They convincingly demonstrated this in their dog voice, which was faucalised and purposely silly: “*ar wuv yew!*”

Ben knew when they are talking about him. He watched them with his tail swaying slowly from side to side, trying to figure out why they were making those familiar noises. Grace shook her head in light-hearted self-awareness. “If people could listen to us...”, she trailed off while looking tenderly at Ben, who has found himself in front of her to demand some affection. Grace — and Jacob, who was in proximity — happily obliged.



fig. 3 – Ben with his parents

But Ben’s life doesn’t revolve just around these whimsical merriments. He has important responsibilities, too. When Grace and Jacob moved in with Grace’s dad, Ben got a new canine

companion himself: Bruce, Grace's dad's Saint Bernard who has become deaf. Ben loves having him around and makes sure of their continued togetherness in many ways, one of which is just extraordinary, loyal, and so very sweet: by being Bruce's ears.

When someone comes to the door at their home, Ben makes sure to get Bruce involved. 'Hey Bruce', Ben alerts Bruce with excitement, 'there's someone at the door!' Bruce is enticed. 'Huh', he gets up, ready to go. 'Let's go check it out'.

They then head to the door together, two big floofy boys joined by their shared inquisitiveness, to find out what all the fuss is about. If they're lucky, it would be the postman who brings them treats. If not, that's okay. They're not discouraged. You see, they are optimists: there's always next time.



fig. 4 – Portobello Beach (left) and the Braids (right), both (clearly) very popular dog spots in Edinburgh

On a dark and blustery evening in mid-February 2020, umma (my mother), who came to visit me from Seoul, and I braced ourselves against the intense gust of Storm Dennis to attend an event about dogs. I had scribbled it in my calendar as the ‘*Lost Dog* book event’ and scheduled a reminder on my phone to pick up the tickets at Topping & Co. bookstore, where the event was supposed to take place. But I was informed via email and once again at the bookstore that there was a last-minute change of venues due to the higher-than-anticipated demand.

Greenside Parish Church, the new venue, was already bustling with attendees and staff when we arrived. The pews quickly filled up with a stream of people, most of whom were having conversations amongst themselves — unsurprisingly — about dogs. We found a spot somewhere in the centre, and soon after, one of the event organisers introduced *Lost Dog* to the eager audience as ‘an ode to the enduring relationship between human and canine’ before Kate Spicer, the author, came up to the stage. Barely audible but fuzzy atmospheric noises from the microphone permeated the chilly air in the small gap of time between the end of the introductory remarks and the author’s first words about the layout of the event. It was going to be a talk organised in a comedic and digestible ‘listicle’ format, interspersed with readings of small segments from her book, she said. The title: *eight things only dog owners know*. Her dog, Wolfy (the dog the book is based on), made himself at home on the author’s coat that she willingly laid down for her scruffy but bony lurcher. She joked that “there’s no coat so good I don’t let him lie on it”, which drew the first of many laughs to come.

The author elicited affirming nods, synchronous laughter, and harmonic *mhm*’s from the audience throughout the event. Ranging from “dogs are oxytocin on tap; it never runs out” to “you’re a loyal servant who follows the dog around while he walks around and poops wherever he pleases”, from “there’s a special voice when you talk to your dog” to “you change when you have a dog”, the insightful, humorous, and relatable knowledges pertaining to the dog that Spicer shared with the audience resonated with a church-full of people who gathered at this specific place and time for their love of dogs.

What I am curious about and will explore in this chapter are a) where these knowledges about dogs come from, and b) how people make sense and use of them (or, what people *do* with these knowledges). I take seriously the understanding that all knowledge is *situated*: that is, knowledge is never born in an epistemological vacuum, but instead, is connected to places and times and their historically specific material conditions, as well as the identities, locations, and values of people living — and knowing — in these conditions (Haraway 1991). Using this conceptualisation of knowledge, I trace the epistemic threads of dog knowledge that my participants shared with me in order to explore some historically specific cultural knowledge of dogs in Edinburgh from October 2019 to October 2020, which to many, including myself, included some of the weirdest, most cruel, and most painful times in the pandemic. I detail the ways in which these knowledges are interpreted and utilised in multispecies kinship practices, through both viral and nonviral times.

Central to my thinking, as explored in the introduction, is Strathern's (1992) notion of 'merographic connections'. As a way of making knowledge, merographic connections produce infinite future realities by shifting contexts, which is made possible by the proposition that anything may be a part of something else, and may always be re-defined from another perspective (72–73, 76). These connections reveal that "the logic of the totality is not necessarily to be found in the logic of the parts, but in the principles and forces that exist beyond parts" (76). The perspectival shifts in merographic connections happen between parts that belong to different wholes. I specifically look at how humans use merographic connections to make their knowledge about their dogs and argue that thinking about knowledge as something produced through making merographic connections is an attempt to *think-with* (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017) and thus *know-with* dogs. I show that when dog people make merographic connections vis-à-vis dogs, or more specifically and importantly, *their* dogs, the gaps between the categories with which we think about dogs (such as breed, species, and rescue) become more noticeable — much like the gap filled with barely audible but fuzzy atmospheric noises that came to the fore in the moments between words.

These gaps also highlight the differences between human and canine *umwelten* (Uexküll 2010 [1940]), understood as perceptual worlds (that vary from species to species) in which organisms use

their bodies and senses to perceive the environments around them species-specific ways in order to make sense and use of their worlds (often in evolutionarily beneficial ways). Here, I follow Weaver's (2021) concept of 'knowledge-as-sensibility' — which puts into conversation Uexküll's *umwelt* and Puig de la Bellacasa's 'thinking-with care' — to reimagine the concept of knowledge in terms of the multispecies and intersubjective possibilities that open up when we think about different practices and configurations consisted of multispecies "doings, social mapping, and related material shapings through which abstractions [of knowledge] emerge and pertain" (2021, 72).

I then expand on Ritvo (1986) and Cassidy's (2002) idea of multispecies intersubjectivity to illustrate that the knowledges produced through the work of merographic connections and sensibilities help create and sustain multispecies and intersubjective knowledge that is crucial to kin-making across species boundaries. While Ritvo and Cassidy focused on the intersubjectivity of moral and social status between nonhuman animals and humans, I look at sensory and intimacy practices that are at once speculative and intersubjective, in multispecies kinship between dogs and their humans. This bodily practice often combines multiple scales of knowledge that require merographic thinking and sensibilities.

Finally, I posit that the differences in our species-specific bodies and senses are not only important but *necessary* to generating new kinds of knowledge, such as an embodied practice that centres our intersubjective endeavour to feel-with and know-with one another. That is, gaps that exist due to our differences (on the species, breed, or individual scale) are crucial sites from which continuous efforts to think and know, not just about, but *with* (that is, *intersubjectively*) arise, and by extension, are also sites from which the everyday practices of multispecies kinship are conceived.

a very brief historical background on dog breeds

According to Worboys et al., "dogs being seen principally in terms of breed and as a number of distinct breeds began in the mid-Victorian period" (2018, 1). Before 'breed' became standardised, variation among dogs was considered normal, and the forms, abilities, and characters of dogs were

directly related to their function (Worboys et al. 2018, 23). That is, dogs' shapes, temperaments, and behavioural tendencies were adapted to the work that they were assigned to carry out in a specific environment. For example, pastoral breeds such as collies and cattle dogs were bred for herding, which instinctively drove them to herd groups of animals; sighthound breeds such as greyhounds were bred to use their sight to chase a moving target at a rapid speed; scent hound breeds such as bloodhounds were bred to follow a trail of scent to get to their prey.

But the emergent idea of breed in the Victorian era was predicated on conforming dogs to physical standards that were uniform within a breed but distinct among different breeds. The traits that constituted a breed were to be genetically inheritable, even though it was not always possible to predict the inheritability. However, even though breed-specific traits are genetic, “breeds were, and still are, [also] coproduced socially and materially” (Worboys et al. 2018, 8): breeds reflected historically specific ideas and ideals in the culture and society in which the breeds were produced and reproduced, and carried with them certain sociocultural identities such as class, gender, and nationality, which formed intersubjective connections between dogs and humans (Worboys et al. 2018, 13).

Ritvo (1989) explored this connection between sociocultural identities of humans and dog breeds. As dog breeding became a popular pastime of the urban middle-class (who adapted their practice from livestock breeding), breeding standards became increasingly detached from practical function. This paved the way for pedigree dog breeds to be developed almost entirely for the pleasure of dog people and their “desire and ability to manipulate” (Ritvo 1989, 115). Centuries of selective breeding practices based on these principles led to the standardisation of pedigree dog breeds as we know them today, human creations categorised according to human needs and wants.

But this is not to say that dog breeds have become an entirely aesthetic/physical typology. Breeders also selected for specific behaviours, which meant that breeding according to standardised breeding criteria engendered some genetically predisposed behavioural traits (Van den Berg 2016; Vonholdt and Driscoll 2016). Studies in behavioural genetics of dog breeds show that there are breed differences that stem from genetic variation. For example, “certain breeds are predisposed to

obsessive-compulsive behaviours: bull terriers frequently exhibit tail chasing, while Doberman pinschers are prone to acral licking” (Van den Berg 2016, 70). Although both genetic and environmental influences contributed to behavioural traits and their manifestation and heritability varied from trait to trait, many across-breed studies found consistent differences between dog breeds (Hart and Hart 2016, 119). Though, a recent and massive study that included more than 18,000 dogs showed that “on average, breed explained only around 9% of the variation in how a dog behaved” (Kreier 2022; see Morrill et al. 2022).

I bring this up not to go into the details of behavioural genetics in dog breeding practices, but to highlight how humans have used selective breeding, for centuries, to *invent* dog breeds and their associated traits that are genetically encoded in their very flesh. This history of dog breeds in the UK serves as an important and relevant backdrop to the contemporary knowledge practices surrounding our multispecies kinship in two ways that I wish to explore further in this chapter. First, I look at the understanding of dog breeds as a genetically engineered human invention and its implications for understanding individual dogs as a member of a breed. Second, I expand on the concept of intersubjectivity, but not as a linking of human social status and dog breeds (see Ritvo 1989 for the moralisation of rabies and Cassidy 2002 for racehorse breeding as an activity that affirms human socioeconomic class), and instead as an active kinmaking practice through making merographic connections that show the gaps between different ways of understanding a dog.

breed determinism and retrospectivism

The genetic understanding of dog breeds was widespread and commonly agreed upon (though Morrill et al. 2022 has recently problematised this and it would be interesting to see if the new findings become accepted as common knowledge of breeds), not just in textbooks, but also by individual dog people that I met during my fieldwork, and ‘breed’ was indeed something that came up (although to varying degrees) in every single interview I conducted. When Celine, a puppy walker (someone who takes care of potential future guide dogs in their puppyhood and is responsible for their well-being), told me about Evie, a ‘failed’ guide dog whom Celine has puppy walked herself

and later adopted as a companion animal, Evie's breed as a German shepherd was brought up several times to explain her physiology, intelligence, and dispositions: "she's a powerful dog — she's a German shepherd", "she's a clever girl — obviously, she's a German shepherd", "she's very friendly because she's a German shepherd".

Celine also held the knowledge that certain breeds were better suited than others for guide dog work due to their temperaments: "they do have golden retrievers. Sometimes they can be quite stubborn dogs — they have a stubborn streak about them. So they use a lot of Lab[rador retriever] crossed with golden retrievers, because you get the good parts of both breeds. They also have Labradoodles (Labrador retriever crossed with standard poodle) for people with allergies. We had some flat-coat retrievers which we crossed with Labradors, but they weren't too successful. We've had some collie crosses... some of them were brilliant, but the ones that didn't work *really* didn't work, you know? And we got some curly coat retrievers just now, but the Labradors as well. Because they're so easy to train with food and things, they're perfect candidates". For Celine, dogs' success or failure as guide dog could be broadly attributed to their breed-specific traits, including the German shepherd's success rate of about 35%. "Their success rate is only 35%, because they don't cope well with change so much, because they're kind of one-man dogs. They say that they're like the Rolls Royce of guide dogs, because they are so good, but getting them to become guide dogs is the difficult part", she chuckled.

Brooke, a dog behaviourist who, at the time of the interview, was looking after 23 assistance dogs across Scotland, also brought up the importance of breeds, especially as she expressed her concern about lockdown puppies and their breeds. She had seen a lot of failed or struggling multispecies families, especially those who perhaps didn't think enough about the dogs' breed-specific needs:

I saw on the Meadows Share this morning that somebody's put a post up saying 'does anyone know where we can get a dog or a puppy? There's two humans here who really want a dog!'¹ And

¹ According to *The Telegraph*, Britain has reached a state of 'peak dog' of over 11 million dogs across the UK due to the 'lockdown puppy' phenomenon (Fox-Leonard 2021). Meadows Share is a popular Facebook group for Edinburgh locals to share information about what's going on in the city, including public events, things for free or for sale, etc. It's kind of a city-wide virtual bulletin board.

somebody else commented straight away underneath, ‘oh yeah, I also need a dog’. But what about what the dog needs? Can we answer that question first? Constantly, there are people who are getting the wrong breeds [for them]. Like, border collies are really popular, and a lot of people get them from farms. But obviously, then, you’re dealing with a genetic background that’s designed to work. They want to herd. They just want to herd things, even kids. Or a lot of them try to chase traffic. They go crazy at cars, but it’s because they’re genetically programmed to see movements and try to control it.

In these ways, breed was often understood by dog people as a strong factor that is fixed in their very being, determining to varying degrees the breed-specific traits and dispositions in terms of the anatomy, physiology, temperament, and behaviour. These varying particularities, which were defined and categorised according to human desire (e.g., herding behaviour for livestock management, speed for racing, etc.) and embedded in canine genetics through selective breeding, marked the differences that made distinct ‘breeds’ in dog people’s understanding. ‘Breed’ also informed dog people’s identities: quite a few of my participants referred to themselves not only as ‘dog people’ but also as ‘shepherd family’, ‘pointy hound person’, and ‘spaniel people’ who only had dogs of a certain breed or breed group. This kind of multispecies intersubjectivity between dogs and humans that I saw in my fieldwork was not so much about sharing of social status (see Ritvo 1989) as it was about knowing, understanding, and choosing a breed (and all its associated traits) that literally *identifies with* their human way of being and living, so much so that they become ‘[breed] people’. This, however, is not to say that breed no longer has anything to do with social status (see Weaver 2021); rather, what I wish to highlight here is that breed was understood as more than a parallel analogy for one’s social status and as part of one’s identity and *habitus* (Bourdieu 1984). But let us hold this thought for now; I will return to this matter of intersubjectivity later.

Where things got a bit more complicated was in dogs that are not ‘purebred’, dogs that are not ‘pedigree’ — the mutts, the mongrels, and even ‘designer’² breeds that often have portmanteau names like ‘pomsky’ (Pomeranian x husky) or ‘goldendoodle’ (golden retriever x poodle), or

² ‘Designer dogs’ refer to crossbreeds made of two different pedigree breeds.

‘cavachon’ (Cavalier King Charles spaniel x bichon frise). In other words, *dogs that are in the gaps between pedigree breeds*. In knowing about multi-breed dogs, the understanding of breed often shifted to make sense of the different traits and dispositions retrospectively (see Cassidy 2002). In other words, dogs in these gaps were understood from a perspective different from what I would call ‘breed determinism’ through which a dog is understood as a member of a breed in an inescapable way, e.g., Celine’s understanding of Evie was largely based on her German-shepherd-ness, and her traits and dispositions were expected due to her breed. But when a dog belonged to multiple different breeds, that is, when parts belong to different wholes — as anything may be a part of something else and may always be re-defined from another perspective (Strathern 1992, 72–73, 76) — a merographic shift in perspective happened, from breed determinism to what can perhaps be best described as ‘breed retrospectivism’.

In designer dogs, the ‘best case scenario’ was as Celine told me: Labrador retrievers crossed with golden retrievers can make good guide dogs “because you get the good parts of both breeds”. The ‘worst case scenario’ was as Brooke described cockapoos (cocker spaniel x poodle): “cockers tend to be resource-guardy [(protective of their ‘stuff’, especially food)] and poodles tend to be quite snappy, so if you cross them, you get a snappy resource guarder”. Of course, the likelihood of a dog either hitting the genetic jackpot or totally missing the mark is much slimmer than falling somewhere in the vast, chaotic, and complex in-between, because heritability is unpredictable even in ‘purebred’ dogs. But through a breed retrospectivist lens, different characteristics were noticed and identified as a breed-specific trait, whether this was true or not, genetically speaking. For example, Alicia, a former-accountant-turned-dog-walker who has Apollo, a cockapoo, attributed his ‘craziness’ to his cocker spaniel side, saying “I think the cocker in him is pretty crazy”. Similarly, Jacob, who met Grace, his wife, on Instagram through their shared love of dogs, immediately said “it’s the Samoyed in him” when Ben, a Swiss shepherd x Samoyed, made some interesting grumbling noises during our interview. Grace also informed me that “Ben’s got a terrible bark, like a sissy bark”, which Jacob again traced to “his Samoyed side”.

While breed retrospectivist way of thinking relies on breed as a main category through which dogs can be understood, it also gave humans some creative and speculative epistemic freedom in

interpreting their dogs as containing parts that belong to different wholes, beings who contain multiple. And sometimes, this epistemic freedom even prevailed against genetic data. Recall that even though there is no reliable way to predict how genetic traits will manifest, due to extensive selective breeding practices, breeds became genetically discernible from one another. The genetic differences can be traced through commercially available DNA testing, which Jack, a dog walker and trainer, used to find out his dog Jules' combination of breeds. "I adopted him when he was about one year old. I adopted him as a beagle. Previous owners bought him as a beagle puppy. But I knew he wasn't a [purebred] beagle", Jack said, motioning at Jules who was peacefully asleep on the sofa behind him. "This is because they weren't familiar with what his breed is. But yeah, because I knew he wasn't a beagle, I decided to do the DNA test".

The DNA test revealed that Jules' breed was a mixture of basset hound, beagle, and harrier. From a breed determinist standpoint, the data showing Jules' genetic makeup would have been taken as indisputable: after all, 'breed' was supposedly grounded in distinguishable genome that varied from breed to breed, a result of selective breeding and thus genetically traceable. However, Jack raised an interesting objection to the DNA test results: "I don't see any basset hound in him at all. He looks like a harrier with a bit of beagle". This objection stemmed from Jack's perspective on Jules' phenotype (observable characteristics and traits) rather than his genotype (genetic constitution). Here, genotype and phenotype were merographically connected, which made it possible for Jack to dispute the genotypical data in favour of phenotypical data that he himself collected through his observation of Jules over the years by shifting the perspective from which he understood Jules' breed composition. "Well, he's got much longer legs, deep chest, taut belly", Jack said, glancing at Jules who stretched out his long, elegant, not-basset-hound-like legs.

YOU HAVE A BASSET HOUND, HARRIER, BEAGLE MIX

The **Wisdom Panel® Insights™** computer algorithm performed over seven million calculations using 11 different models (from a single breed to complex combinations of breeds) to predict the most likely combination of pure and mixed breed dogs in the last 3 ancestral generations that best fit the DNA marker pattern observed in [redacted]. The ancestry chart depicting the best statistical result of this analysis is shown in the picture below.

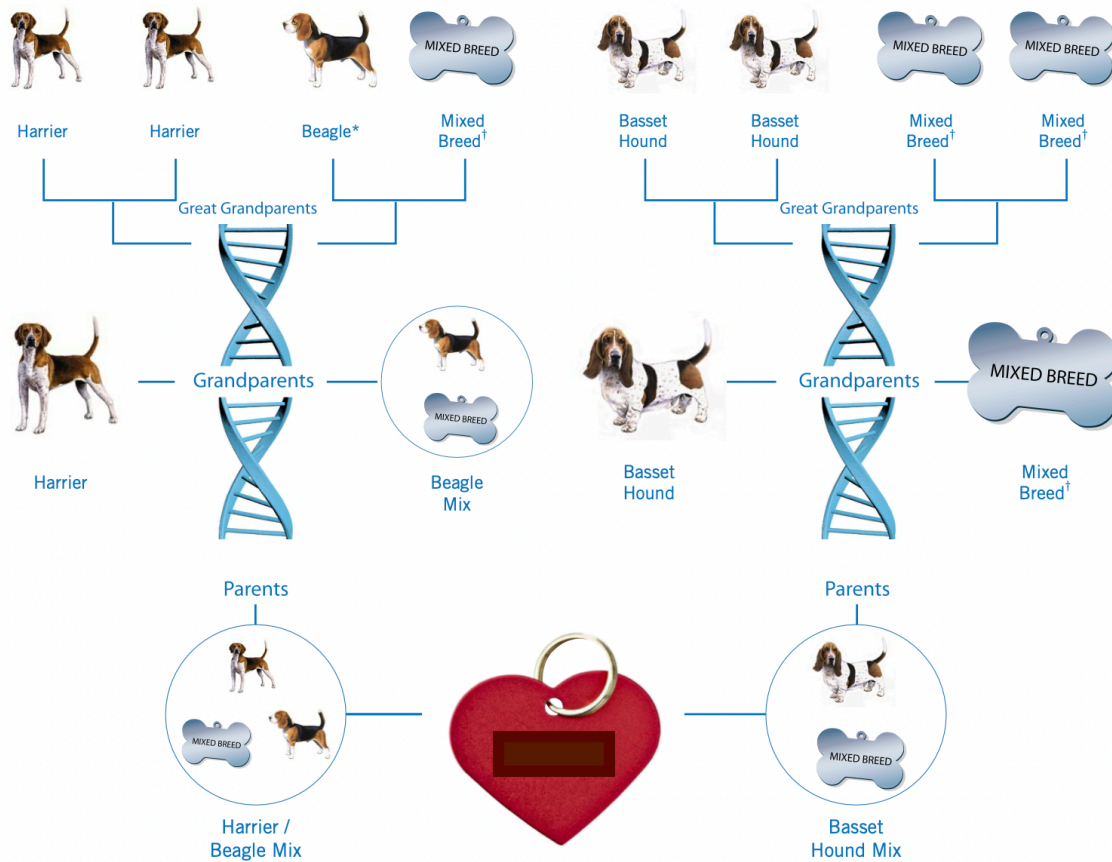


fig. 5 – Jules’ DNA test result

Similarly, Bella, a final-year veterinary student, challenged the DNA test results showing that her dog Jasper was partially a Shar Pei, a breed known for its wrinkled skin that creates ripples of folds throughout the body but especially in the face. “I mean, there’s just no way”, Bella said adamantly, speculating out loud that “they must have like, a disproportionate amount of Shar Pei DNA in their database or something”. When strangers asked Bella what breed Jasper was on our walks together, she told them that he is a collie x shepherd cross — more specifically, a border collie x Belgian shepherd groenendael — based on Jasper’s dense coat, long snout and hair, pointy ears, and a strong

drive to chase, rather than the DNA test results. The test results had little significance in Bella's understanding of Jasper's breed, as they were incompatible with her speculative knowledge of Jasper.



fig. 6 – top: a Shar Pei and a Belgian shepherd groenendael (The Kennel Club 2021) / bottom: Frank and Jasper

In this way, the idea of a 'breed' could be perceived and understood through multiple lenses, producing different knowledges that were simultaneously of the same whole (of 'genetic

understanding of dog breeds’) and of different wholes (of ‘genotype’ vs. ‘phenotype’). These merographic connections around the idea of breed(s) produced knowledges surrounding the dog that humans used to understand and make sense of their dogs by shifting the ways in which they looked at the concept of breed itself. However, as important as ‘breed’ was, it was not the only category through which people understood their dogs; there were different ‘wholes’ that dogs were a part of outside the category of ‘breed’, as dogs occupied roles other than members of their breed(s). The following section explores some of these roles, such as member of the species *Canis lupus familiaris* and a ‘rescue’, further expanding the range of merographic connections and the production of knowledge from these connections.

beyond breed: species and rescue

With a surge in the number of lockdown puppies and rescue adoptions, dog training classes seemed to have met a boom of sorts in the summer of 2020 even as they moved online due to restrictions. In this strange temporal context, I attended a series of virtual training classes specifically for rescue dogs led by Moira, a hilarious Scottish woman who flashed a warm and bright smile every time she talked about dogs, which happened to be — unsurprisingly, given her vocation as a dog trainer — most of the time.

Before the first class of a series, which was supposed to be focused on recall, began, Moira laid out the logic behind any and all dog training exercises, which she called the ‘ABC of dog training’, where A stood for antecedent, B for behaviour, and C for consequence. The ABC was linear in its logic: “We must understand the A to explain the B”, Moira said. “We might not see the A all the time, but we must be able to read the dog’s body language *before* the B happens”. As Moira explained, the human attendees nodded while taking notes. “Once the B is done, dogs are not interested in you anymore”. She then gave a simple and relatable example of how the ABC works: A, a dog sees a cat; B, a dog barks or chases; and C, a dog gets yelled at.

Throughout the class, the ABC of dog training was applied to understand dogs as members of their species that cognitively process their environments in a specific way that humans should learn about in order to live well together in a shared home environment. The focus of this class, recall (getting a dog to return to their human), was practised through an activity that Moira called the ‘ready’ game. It involved saying ‘ready?’ and once the dog was paying attention, throwing some treats on the floor for the dog to eat. The distance between the human and the treat being tossed was increased gradually as the game went on, with the goal of getting the dog to return to the human upon hearing ‘ready?’ for a new round of tossed treats.

The human attendees followed the instructions as Moira watched them gradually increase the distance between themselves and the treat. Things seemed to be going as planned: Clare, one of the attendees, said that her dog, a Spanish rescue, has come back every single time, which Moira congratulated. Sheila, the other attendee, seemed immersed in the exercise, but she reported that her dog, a Romanian rescue, stopped coming all the way back to her once he ate the treat that was thrown as the distance between her and the treat increased, choosing instead to stay where he found the treat. Moira explained this behaviour again through the ABC method, telling Sheila that the antecedent was that the treats were being thrown far, the behaviour was that her dog realised he didn’t need to come close for the treats, so the consequence was that he thought he was getting rewarded for staying far rather than coming back. To address this, Moira told Sheila to change the antecedent: “start throwing the treats closer to your feet”. Indeed, her dog quickly realised that he had to come closer to get the treats, and the consequence soon became that he came back all the way to Sheila once he realised that the reward of the treat was for closing the distance between his human and himself upon hearing ‘ready?’ rather than the act of going after the treat. “Dogs’ brains work things out quickly”, Moira added as she watched Sheila and her dog successfully carry out the ‘ready’ game again.

Here, dogs were understood through the lens of their species. The ABC of dog training was to apply to all dogs, regardless of their breed. Seeing dogs as a member of their species — a part of a whole that was not their breed but their species — allowed people to produce a different kind of knowledge about their dogs, knowledge related to canine cognition and learning. Understanding dogs as a

member of their species also allowed humans to decipher how their dogs felt about what was happening around them — that is, how they show their response to being affected by their environment. A few weeks after this class in late July 2020, I attended the last class of the series, which was attended only by one pair of attendees: Eve and her recent international rescue dog Cory, who was adopted six weeks before this session took place. I had met them online before and remembered how aloof and disengaged Cory was then. But two weeks seemed to have made a big difference: Eve was down on the floor, lovingly stroking Cory, who was giving her little kisses. “He’s getting cheekier. He’s getting more curious about things outside — squirrels, mostly. Lunging at squirrels, jumping, trying to chase”, Eve told Moira.

“Don’t tell a dog off. Chasing is communicating what they find fun”, Moira explained, “we should re-direct the chase drive by allowing them to chase something that *we* manifested, something safe that they find more interesting than the squirrel”. This explanation wasn’t specific to Cory’s breed, but applicable to dogs in general. Indeed, just as the training exercises that Moira taught in her previous classes applied to ‘dogs’ as members of their species, this session used a species-wide understanding of dogs and their body language to help Eve get to know Cory’s state of mind. She focused specifically on Cory’s tail: “if that tail goes up, you know you got a wee happy boy”, she said, noticing that his tail was drooping. “His tail is still kind of down. He’s still a bit unsure”.

The reading of canine body language, like the ABC of dog training, sought to understand dogs on the level of the species, so the cognitive and physiological characteristics of *Canis lupus familiaris* — “dogs’ brains” and “that tail” — shaped the training exercises and the understanding of the behaviour that the dogs exhibited throughout the class. The breeds of the dogs seemed to have little importance, as they were understood through the lens of their species — a different whole to ‘breed’ — in this training class.

But Cory’s species was not the only whole he belonged to; he was also a *rescue* — an international one at that. Adopted from Romania as a former stray, Cory had never lived indoors with humans before he was transported to Edinburgh by shelter workers who specialised in international dog adoption. ‘Rescue’ operated strangely similarly to the category of ‘breed’, perhaps most obviously so

in the phrase ‘rescue is my favourite breed’, a popular slogan often seen on t-shirts and mugs. However, rescues were not genetically defined — rather, they were understood as a category of dogs with certain kinds of (often tragic, to varying extents) life history that influenced current behaviours.

For Moira, shifting the lens through which to understand Cory from his species to his status as a rescue allowed for the production of yet another kind of knowledge: “Think about the dog’s emotional state when you do training, especially with food and impulse control with a rescue. They’ve known starvation”, she said to Eve. She then added, “rescues are just like puppies, because you have to teach them everything from scratch. But people are often much more willing to give puppies a chance and patience. I’m especially interested in rescues because they all have histories — abuse, starvation, etc.”, she trailed off, glancing at her own dogs in the background, both of whom were rescues themselves.

I knew, both from being a dog person and from my fieldwork, that a dog’s status as a rescue *stuck* with the dog for a long time — once a rescue, always a rescue — and in a very stubborn kind of way. In other words, rescue dogs came with a lot of baggage, both real/known and imagined/speculated. For example, Sandra told me that Forest, her Spanish rescue hound, was traumatised from travelling to Scotland from northern Spain over three days. “It’s all DEFRA [(Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs)]-approved and everything, but the crate was stacked three high, two deep, and literally just on top of each other with cardboard down the bottom. So, he really doesn’t like cardboard on the floor. He doesn’t like sliding doors and vans. It’s really petrified him”, she said, petting Forest who has climbed on to her lap with his front paws as if to ask for some affectionate reassurance.

Toward the end of our interview, I got to witness another piece of Forest’s baggage that supposedly stemmed from his rescue-ness. Frank and Forest were just hanging out peacefully next to each other and Sandra was telling me about how her and her partner had just started letting him on the sofa when Forest was startled by someone using a walking stick and started barking. His deep, loud hound-y bark resonated throughout the pub and momentarily interrupted the interview. Sandra immediately pulled out a tube of pâté to distract Forest with it to get him to stop barking. “Yeah,

he's just not a fan of walking sticks", Sandra said as Forest busily lapped at the pâté being squeezed out of the tube. "He's a Spanish rescue and he's probably been hit by sticks when he was a hunting dog".

The word 'probably' here was an important and interesting one, noting that the claim of abuse was in fact a speculation. Indeed, fear of long stick-like objects is common in non-rescue dogs as well (because they can simply look like a big, scary, and weird thing to a dog), but humans of rescue dogs often utilised their dogs' being a rescue — and the baggage that came with the label — to extrapolate as a reason behind certain behaviours. Bella had a similar speculative explanation for Jasper's reactive behaviour toward an elderly man on our street who regularly picks up trash with a long litter picking stick. "I think it might be because, you know, like, the snares they use? Jasper was a street dog, so he might associate that stick with that", she thought out loud as she attempted to distract and calm Jasper down with his favourite treat as the elderly man walked by with his litter picking stick and a large bin bag.

The dog people I have spoken to thus often used this 'storying' (Weaver 2021) of the rescue narrative as an attempt to understand their dogs and their behaviours through speculations. Whether the speculations were 'true' or not wasn't all that significant; what mattered was that the humans took note of the behaviours displayed by their rescue dogs as something to learn about, engage with, and respond to. As Moira told me and the attendees of her training classes once, "we work with the behaviour that is in front of us", no matter what the actual exact story behind the behaviour might be. That is, whether Forest was actually hit by sticks or not before he was adopted by Sandra and whether Jasper was actually caught by a snare attached to a long stick didn't have as much significance to their humans as the behaviours that they displayed, which were interpreted as distress and fear. In this way, the purpose of speculative storying was not to impose a history upon a dog, but rather to prompt humans to *try* to understand their rescue dogs as beings with specific histories — ones that we may not know for sure — in order to make sense of their dogs' behaviour, or their affective response to things around them.

The knowledges that were produced through the lens of the rescue were thus also fictitious and speculative in nature at the same time: punctuated with conjectures and guesswork based on a very specific kind of narrative predicated on a sort of saviourist scenario wherein a human ‘rescues’ a dog from less-than-ideal situations. And because of this saviourist undertone, these speculations sometimes carried with them some slightly uncomfortable stories that insinuated or depicted violence when rescue owners talked about the category of ‘rescue dogs’, especially when it came to dogs that came to the UK from abroad as an ‘international rescue’.

For example, when Alicia, who had adopted Zoe from Romania as her second dog, told me about the conditions in which stray dogs there live, she painted a picture of horror: “my sister lived in Romania, so I went to visit her before, and it’s normal for you to be walking around and you just see a pack of six dogs. And they pay people to go and catch these dogs and bring them to the shelters, so people are horrible to them. That’s why they’re so petrified of people. They’re like, ‘you’ll get ten pounds if you bring me a dog’ — *imagine*, they go with whatever tools they have, which are usually horrible, to catch these dogs. It’s a massive crisis in Romania. And when you think about countries like this, these people don’t have great conditions of living. Usually, it means animals have it even worse”. Indeed, dog people did *imagine* to produce unverifiable but nonetheless important kinds of knowledge about their dogs as rescues.

In some cases, understanding of a dog through their breed and their status as a rescue co-occurred. Elena, who has three rescue dogs, one of whom is a galgo (a sighthound breed that is similar in morphology to greyhounds) from Spain, speculatively attributed the dog’s preference for women over men to her status as a rescue specifically from Spain: “she’s a galgo. Or galga, because she’s a girl. She is a rescue from Spain, which is probably why she aligns with women better, because women are the rescuers, and men are abusers, especially in Spain. One of the most abused breeds in the world. What’s being done to them is pretty horrific. So right now, it’s hunting season — coming up toward the end. I think February something is the end of the hunting season. That’s when they get rid of the dogs that are no good”. Like the ex-racing greyhounds who often followed the pipeline of being a racer for the first few (prime) years of their lives until they are retired and adopted out to family homes as companion animals (or at least the fortunate ones anyway), galgos, too, had a

pipeline — or a commonly told storyline — that worked as a narrative of the breed that was known not only for its traits but also its dark fate.

“They dispose of the dogs in all kinds of horrific ways, including hanging. The techniques they use, they’re just awful”, Elena continued. “It’s not just the hanging; it’s the various techniques. Some of these methods were used in slaves in the southern states. It’s called piano keys. They hang the dogs just enough that its back legs can touch, so they can dance on their back legs until they’ve exhausted themselves, and then they go limp, then hang themselves. So that’s why it’s called piano keys. The tippy toe legs. They used to do that with slaves as well”. Iris, the galgo, snoozed by the radiator without a care in the world as Elena painted the appalling scene with her words.

Fascinatingly, this practice of ‘storying’ was not exclusive to understanding dogs through the category of rescue, but also of species. Kylie, a 20-something woman who worked as a dog trainer at Dogs Trust, the UK’s largest dog charity, told me that she had just had an unusual class the day before our interview where “all the dogs were so distracted and barking” and “the whole class would just be mad”. She flung her arms around and feigned a frantic expression with her eyes wide, re-enacting her reaction to the chaotic class full of barking dogs. Thinking about Moira’s training classes where the ABC of dog training was repeatedly emphasised to remind the attendees of the cognitive logics behind dog behaviour and training that applied to all dogs, I anticipated that Kylie was going to tell me all about the training methods that she used to calm the dogs down, or even just distract them from the madness. But instead, she unexpectedly asked me if I thought my “dog goes mental when it’s the full moon”, taking me completely by surprise. I was, of course, aware of the myth of the werewolf and the mythical and interpretive understanding that wolves howl at the moon, but I never thought to connect dogs’ behaviours to the phase of the moon. Kylie went on to say, “I never used to think it’s a thing, but sometimes, we have classes and the whole class is mad and it’s the full moon”.

I initially couldn’t really wrap my head around this. It seemed odd and inexplicable that a dog trainer who worked for an organisation that adamantly believed in and practised training methods that were backed by canine cognition research (such as positive reinforcement and no punishment)

would bring up such a mythical hypothesis such as the full moon theory. But this, I realised, was a rather important and interesting way in which humans got to know about dogs. Knowledges about dogs were not just an amalgam of categories. Rather, they were produced through continuous contextualisation and interpretation within and between categories, which involved not only scientifically verified and verifiable ‘facts’ such as canine cognitive functions, but also speculative imaginations concerning myths and stories.

In these ways, dog people made merographic connections between the various categories that pertained to dogs, including their breed(s), species, and ‘rescue’ status to produce knowledges about their dogs as well as about dogs in general. Merographic knowledges about dogs were produced through the act of shifting between different perspectives and categories, defined and re-defined through partial logics that belonged to different kinds of wholes in the human attempt to know about and understand dogs. Meaningfully, dog people regularly engaged their speculative imagination, especially when dogs evaded certain categories (e.g., mixed breed dogs that literally belong to different ‘wholes’) and when dogs’ status called for filling in the gaps (e.g., rescue ‘storying’). These imaginative practices involved in merographic connections revealed not only that the categories through which humans knew about dogs were produced in the endeavour to *think-with* (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017) dogs — that is, to take into consideration “the concerns, needs, and histories of dogs” (Weaver 2021, 51) — but also the speculative but generative possibilities that reside in liminal areas between human and canine *umwelten*, the environmental world that organisms perceive, experience, engage with, and affect (Uexküll 2010 [1940]). In other words, merographic connections as a way of producing knowledges about dogs shed light on the imaginative ways in which dog people consistently attempted to understand dogs and their bodies — anatomies, physiologies, cognition, genetics, or, as Moira said, “the behaviour that is in front of us” — that are inevitably very different from humans and their bodies.

Here, it matters that knowledge is *situated*. Or, as Weaver (2021) wrote, “The location that any one of us might self-ascribe does not necessarily enable us to understand the experiences of another positioned almost identically” (2021, 71), because each body, each environment, each situation is specific, producing specific subjectivities. Dog people’s knowledges, founded on the endeavour to

know about dogs merographically, were grounded in and made by the real, material, subjective bodies that produced and categorised them. The perceiving and affecting bodies were thus entangled with one another in multispecies relations between dogs and humans in their shared environments. These bodies and their senses operated “beyond the knowledge claims common to an anthropocentric episteme” (Weaver 2021, 57). That is, human and canine bodies entangled in multispecies kinship produced knowledges that were not always concerned with the human-made categories, such as breed, species, and rescue, that formed the archive of human knowledge of dogs. Instead, these knowledges were ‘knowledge-as-sensibility’ (Weaver 2021), taking embodiment seriously as a process and practice of knowledge production. In the next section, I largely draw on autoethnographic accounts to explore the kinds of knowledges that were made through the continuous “attempt to produce knowledge attuned to, in concert with, and derived from the ... dogs themselves” (Weaver 2021, 51) and to illustrate the ways in which these knowledges were utilised in multispecies everyday life.

sensibility and intersubjectivity (or, dogs as subjects)

In November 2019, Gina, one of my research participants who worked as a ‘volunteer client’ at the University of Edinburgh’s veterinary school, invited me (with permission from the lecturer) to accompany her to observe the ‘client communication skills’ class designed for first year veterinary students. Before we entered the classroom, I looked around at the 30-or-so bright-eyed first-year veterinary students mostly in their late teens, standing around a bit awkwardly, and several volunteer clients who seemed already be familiar and friendly with one another. Once the door to the classroom opened, I saw that the desks and chairs in the classroom were set up in such a way that people were to be divided into smaller groups. The lecturer shortly asked that we form groups of three to five students and a volunteer client per group. I didn’t really know what to expect from the class, although I presumed from the name of the class that it would involve teaching students about the interpersonal skills required in becoming a successful veterinarian. I followed and sat next to Gina like a nervous dog.

As everybody settled down and the initial chatter amongst the students died down, the lecturer requested that the students assign a speaker from each group who could present the findings at the end of the group activity of collecting some information from the volunteer clients about their animals. Then, she emphatically said, “owners know their animals best” to all the students before the groups embarked on the activity. The students asked Gina some initial questions that were framed in terms of the categories of species and breed, such as ‘what kind of animal do you have?’ and once she told them that amongst many kinds of animals she had as pets was a dog, ‘what breed is your dog?’. Some of the students were dog people themselves; they shared their existing knowledge of dogs based largely on species and breed, starting a comfortable and pleasant conversation.

But without any probing at all, Gina started telling the three students in our group about her pedigree shih tzu Peanut’s personality, quirks, and habits. She pulled out her phone and showed the students photos and videos of Peanut. The group organically gathered around Gina as she swiped through the photo gallery on her phone. Some of Peanut’s noteworthy quirks were discussed: he was a picky eater who looked longingly at the kitchen drawers in the hopes of a better treat when he was offered a subpar treat. He sat right in the middle of Gina’s L-shaped couch, taking up a surprising amount of room considering his size as a small dog. He demanded to be greeted by everyone he ran into on a walk, refusing to budge until he was acknowledged vocally, or preferably, with physical touch. He chased the vacuum cleaner every time Gina pulled it out to clean the house, not letting it out of his sight until the cleaning was complete. It was then that I started thinking about not just the neatly organised archives of knowledges that humans produced about (their) dogs, but also the messy and unruly altars of knowledges that emerged from bodies entangled in multispecies kinship and all its practices and configurations.

This experience of tagging along to the veterinary school classroom later led to the opportunity to become a volunteer client myself, though virtually, in the first semester of 2020. The online format of the classroom in 2020 mirrored the in-person classroom that I saw in 2019: a group of 30-ish first-year veterinary students eager and slightly nervous for class to begin, while the lecturer, the same one from 2019, informed the students that the class would begin in a few minutes while latecomers rolled in, their names appearing on the side of the screen as they joined the virtual classroom. The

lecturer welcomed the students as the attendance list started to look more substantial and informed them of the purpose of the class, which was to help students develop ‘client communication skills’, because — just as she had said in the classroom in 2019 — “owners know their animals best”. She told the students that they would be divided into smaller groups of three to five students with a volunteer client in each group to practice collecting information about the nonhuman patient, and requested that the students assign a speaker from each group to present the findings at the end of the group activity. “Remember that *owners know their animals best*”, she emphasised once again before sending everyone off to their breakout groups on the conference call software used for the class.

I was put in a group with three students who awkwardly said hello to me and to each other. One of them volunteered to be the speaker for the group, and they started asking me about Frank. I told them that I have a dog, that his name is Frank, and that he’s a rescue border collie. And just like Gina, I launched into a bit of a monologue about Frank without any prodding from the students: Frank was a ‘chill’ dog indoors who liked to hang out, snooze on the couch, ask for pets now and then before returning to the couch for more naps. But on our walks, our bodies connected by the lead, he kept me on my toes with his reactivity toward particular things, such as squirrels and foxes, which he liked to lunge and pull toward to chase after, and motorcycles, which he barked at while spinning around at a surprising speed. He didn’t like joggers, either, especially if they were running quite quickly and toward us rather than at a leisurely speed and in the same direction as us. He especially detested the postman (or ‘postie’, as I have often heard my participants and Brits say) who came to our building on a daily basis on the weekdays, usually between the hours of 10 a.m. and noon; he barked once he entered the building, he barked when he was at the flat door leaving a parcel or a letter, he barked when he exited the building, he *of course* barked when we encountered him outside, and he even barked at the big red Royal Mail cart that this specific postman pushed around. And mysteriously, he made a point to almost always bark at a specific bus (bus 36, a single-decker bus) that we encountered almost every day on our routine walking route around the block, but only on our walking route and never elsewhere in the city. I shared these pieces of information about Frank with the veterinary students with absolute conviction and certainty that these were things my body *knew* about Frank through the loud barks I heard and the tugs I felt on the lead either held in my hand or worn around my torso.

In taking up multispecies “sensory experiences *as* knowledge practices” (Weaver 2021, 57) seriously in this way, I learned that my body developed and exhibited knowledge *with* my dog’s: Frank’s lunging, barking, pulling, and tugging at certain things taught my body to react to those things, too, often with the hairs that stood up at the back of my neck whenever I heard the revving engines of motorcycles or saw a member of the urban wildlife nearby, the hands that clasped the lead a bit tighter and the feet that stepped down from the sidewalk if I saw a jogger coming toward us, and the vocal cords that instinctively called Frank’s name to try to get his attention when I saw the postman or the 36 down the street. These knowledges were born out of sustained bodily attunements between me and Frank, out of ‘sensibility’, a form of knowing that made claims about *bodies* as capable of ‘knowing’ (Weaver 2021, 84). These bodily knowledges were grounded in the ordinary but incredibly intimate, taking seriously “embodying as a means to produce knowledge” (Weaver 2021, 68) and producing “an understanding out of a congeries of bodies, movements, affects” (2021, 56) through constant attunement to one another as well as the shared time-space environments despite our different *umwelten*.

These knowledge production practices brought humans into their bodies to really inhabit the moments when thoughts seemed to loosen their conceptual grip, giving way to sensations to be felt and experienced in the body as intimacy, illustrating “how bodily, affective contact is centered in ... cross-species relatings” (Weaver 2021, 79). And in these affective multispecies relatings, the “emotional attachments that impel such practices, thinkings, and doings” (Weaver 2021, 72) — the *feelings* and the *affects* — made possible a kind of intimacy that was *intersubjective*. That is, these embodied knowledges stemmed from the cross-*umwelten* attempts to understand “the conjoined dance of face-to-face significant otherness” (Haraway 2003, 41) foundational to multispecies kinship. Indeed, these things I knew about Frank, his way of experiencing and engaging with the world, were so deeply embedded in the sinews and fibres of my body — “you change when you have a dog”, as Kate Spicer had said — that I reacted to the things that Frank was reactive toward even in his absence; our subjectivities, how we perceived and affected things in our environment, were thoroughly interwoven.

Ritvo (1989) demonstrated in her history of dog breeding in Victorian Britain that intersubjectivity between dogs and humans then was concerned with linking of social ranks and dog breeds, illustrating that pedigree dogs owned by humans of high social status were considered less likely to be rabid than those of mixed or unknown lineage owned by humans of lower social class (176). Similarly, Cassidy (2002) showed that contemporary racehorse breeding practices associated the status of a racehorse with the status of the human(s) associated with the horse, crossing the ideas of pedigree across the species boundary. The intersubjectivity that I felt with Frank and witnessed among my participants — both human and canine — also implicated class, but through an emphasis on feelings and doings (and their significances) as crucial part of knowing. This emphasis was perhaps a *habitus* of middle-classness, categorising everyday emotions and actions as a classed knowledge practice, wherein “the distinctions ... between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar” (Bourdieu 1984, xxix) shone through everyday choices. In other words, the production and maintenance of these bodily knowledges through a specific *habitus* were at once (classed) epistemic and intimate practices that centred sensory experiences.

These were often experiences of joy that were accompanied by affective phenomena such as laughter that ruptured conversations or irrepressible smiles that lasted so long that they hurt the cheeks. When Bella invited me and Frank to her flat for takeaway pizza and doggy playdate just days before the very first COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020, little did we know then that we were going to go months without spending time together in this way. In her spacious and well-lit living room, she told me that Jasper’s favourite spot to be scratched was his inner thigh when he stationed himself in front of her and slightly tilted his hip open to demand the inner thigh scratches. Their bodies moved in synchronised manners, indicating that they practised this many times before and habituated it together. “He’s so cute. His favourite spot is his inner thigh. He raises his leg, like ‘do it’”, Bella said as she delivered strokes of varied pressures and lengths, attuning to Jasper’s wolfish body as he shifted slightly now and then to get more comfortable on the wooden floor and to get Bella to reach the exact places that he wanted scratched. Her knowledge of Jasper’s body and bodily preferences was produced and affirmed through their multispecies interactions, with Bella’s fingertips and Jasper’s hairy leg connected skin-to-skin, moving together in concert with one another for as long as they

both wanted. In that moment, Bella and Jasper attended “to senses and sensory experiences, both human and dog in building better knowledge” (Weaver 2021, 81).

I shared in return that Frank’s favourite spot to be scratched was the scruff of his neck, and that if you deep-massaged the right spot, he’d place his chin on your non-scratching hand or other chin-level surface area for support as he stretched out his neck in what looked like blissful and relaxing oblivion. I demonstrated this on Frank as I spoke to Bella, and as expected (and as per my knowledge of Frank’s bodily dispositions), Frank put his chin on the palm of my left hand that I’d left open for him on my lap and stretched out his neck while half-closing his eyes. I noticed then that Bella and I were sitting next to each other on her couch without saying a word, petting our respective dogs in the ways that they liked to be petted. We both had huge smiles on our faces, giving our dogs an indulgent massage treatment. Frank and Jasper had satisfied looks upon their faces, too, with Frank looking as though he was getting a step closer to falling asleep with every squeeze on his neck, and Jasper smiling with his mouth — and leg — slightly open as Bella stroked the inside of his leg. It was then that Bella remarked that dogs all had their individual personalities and preferences “even within a breed”, reminding me that dogs were not just understood and known through their breed(s), species, or rescue status, but also as subjects who had specific perspectives, and therefore, knowledges, that stemmed from their own bodies that were always in bodily and proximal engagement with their environments that included humans.

Knowledges produced through existing categories only ever painted incomplete and very partial pictures, leaving much room for uncategorised and uncategorisable knowledges to be produced in the spaces outside of and between existing categories — for example, Jasper and Frank, both of whom are partially collies, dogs, and rescues, had different bodily preferences concerning their favourite spots for scratches that couldn’t be accounted for through the category of breed, species, or rescue status. The complexities of the body, human or canine, often evaded disparate and relatively rigid categories; and in face of complexities, dog people produced knowledge about (their) dogs through their very bodies in conversation with their dogs’ bodies, producing intimacy as and in knowledge in the liminal conceptual spaces beyond categories. Or, as Weaver (2021) put it, “Conscientious efforts to claim knowledge of dogs emerge through a specific form of thinking-with

that works as a bodily, affective relay of responses, a response-ability that works through the sensory” (84).

These bodily and intersubjective knowledges about dogs that were generated through sensibilities not only produced intimacy and closeness (something I explore more in the chapter on loneliness), but also revealed something about knowledges produced in multispecies contexts: that they expand the very notion and meaning of knowledge. Knowing about a dog cannot happen without knowing *with* a dog, as knowing was not just a human endeavour but an intersubjective and multispecies one. Dogs shaped *how* we know as well as what we know through their bodies that feel, and thus, know, thereby blurring the normative boundary between the subject (the knower) and the object (the known/knowable). Both in imagining through merographic connections and sensing through intersubjective bodily engagements, dog people, including myself, were reminded time and time again that knowledge was not created by a singular human subject, but rather in relation to other bodies, both human and canine.

Finally, the continuous attempt to understand a dog through merographic connections and sensory knowledges was central to the continuation of multispecies kinship between dogs and their humans. In using intersubjective imagination to produce different kinds of knowledges, humans and dogs not only *thought-with* and *knew-with*, but also *became-with* (see Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, Haraway 2016 and Weaver 2021). Here, the differences in our species-specific bodies and senses — our different *umwelten* — were crucial: the gaps that exist due to our differences as well as the inherent messiness of inextricably entangled lives. These differences remind us that the mess of liminal spaces between neat categories are precisely the sites in which we can find epistemic potentiality and creativity — or, as Mary Douglas put it, turn “weeds and lawn cuttings into compost” (1966, 202). The following chapters of the dissertation gathers these weeds and lawn cuttings of fieldwork and aims to turn them into fertile and fruitful compost, stuff of multispecies kinship between dogs and their humans.

As I made my way up to Cynthia and Cassie's flat, I found myself pre-empting a deep shepherd bark. My ears were anxiously attuned to the atmosphere, expecting to hear the yet-to-be-heard growling or barking as I approached the door. I breathed deeply and nervously and lifted up my hand to knock. My worries didn't lie in the barking itself, but in Cassie's condition. This interview had been rescheduled once before because Cassie had been recently involved in a serious car accident and she was still recovering. I didn't want Cassie to get too excited or upset and tear her stitches and hurt herself further. Many dogs — understandably — become more sensitive, wary, or even aggressive after experiencing traumatic events, so I mentally prepared myself for whatever could be on the other side of the door.

The accident was truly a frightening event, I was told: while she was usually very sensible about crossing roads, she couldn't help herself when she saw who she thought was their canine neighbour, Kathy, a collie she is obsessed with (and often loses her mind over). 'That's Kathy!', Cassie lunged into the road. Before they knew it, Cassie was knocked 20 feet by a car, *whoomph*.

All the neighbours came out. The passers-by paused in their steps. The woman who was walking the collie — who turned out not to be Kathy but a dog they've never even met — stopped. All the cars halted in a line. Some people even got off the bus to come and help. A circle of concerned humans formed around Cassie, who lay on the pavement with Cynthia's arm around her neck. She blacked out, her eyes rolling to the back of her head for a few seconds and her jaw air-chomping. She ended up suffering from internal injuries which required surgery and a long and arduous recovery period.

But it seemed that the whole ordeal hasn't affected her too much in terms of her character. When I made three tentative taps on the door, Cassie didn't bark once. When I entered the flat, she leaned on my legs with her whole body, her ears flattened to the back of her head while her eyes looked up at me. She was demanding attention and affection from me, a complete stranger to her then. This turned out to be just her character. She was quiet, graceful, gentle, and affectionate (though a bit

mopey at the time due to her injuries). When I sat down on the couch to have a chat with Cynthia and Wendy (Cynthia’s mother who made a surprise appearance), Cassie hopped on the couch, settling herself down next to where I was sitting, to rest her head on my hand. I melted.

Wendy was convinced that Cassie’s graceful temperament helped her get through the accident. “She’s so calm. It doesn’t matter what anyone’s doing to her. All the dressing changes, the stitches, the IV, the catheter”. It was true; Cassie was a very calm and poised dog who received what the world threw at her with elegance. When Cynthia put a Santa hat on Cassie — something that Frank, for example, would’ve most certainly resisted — she just sat there, looking quite pleased, actually. ‘Thanks for the hat! It keeps my ears warm! By the way, have you brought me a treat by any chance?’



fig. 7 – Cassie

A few months later, Frank and I got to go on a walk with Cynthia and Cassie. She has made a full recovery from the car accident with impressive resilience, back to her happy and adventurous self. While Frank has no interest at all in sticks, Cassie is an avid collector of them. She went around the small lake near the hill, meticulously testing out a few contenders. She only took short breaks to get some water and recharge with treats.



fig. 8 – Cassie with a stick / Cassie and Frank

After having tried out many sticks of varying length and weight, she ended up not keeping any that she found during the walk. The shorter, thicker one wasn't weighty enough. The longer, thinner one was too cumbersome. "You don't like any of them?" I asked when she dropped the last stick she was carrying before heading back home. 'No', she looked at me. I picked up the stick she just dropped and asked again, just to make sure. 'I'm okay, really', she reassured me.

But it's no bother; she already has a favourite stick, the Goldilocks of all sticks. Coincidentally, it's the very first one that she brought home years ago. Every subsequent stick must meet its high standard, measured against this perfect stick, her favourite one. Not many do, but it's fine by her. She's a quality over quantity kind of girl.



fig. 9 – dogs I met at Blackford Hill — yet another popular dog spot in Edinburgh. I don't know their names. We've shared but a brief moment, attention-bound by a small piece of chicken treat I was holding. In these fleeting but focused moment, we were hyper-attuned to one another: me, for a photo, and the dogs, for the chicken. In the end, we all got what we wanted.

3 / no future for dog children

I never wanted children. I never saw myself as a potential parent to a human child; I never even ‘played house’ as a kid, nor did I have one of those (rather creepy) mechanised baby dolls that cried out loud with fake tears streaming down their face and demanded a diaper change or feeding. My parents never hinted at whether they had any desire to be grandparents, presumably because they didn’t want to pressure me the way that they were. And I found out soon after our migration to Canada that halmoni’s (my maternal grandmother) wish to live long enough for my marriage and kids was one that she knew wouldn’t come true, as it turned out she was hiding her breast cancer diagnosis from the family. I know now that halmoni hid this from umma so that she wouldn’t ‘inconvenience’ our migration. She knew she didn’t have much time left, and letting the family know would only get in the way of the big intercontinental move up ahead that was going to be a difficult one even without an ill family member left behind. *Parents do that kind of stuff for the sake of their children*, I heard my relatives murmur in the background, when umma, my sister, and I made a trip back to Seoul when halmoni was no longer able to live at home due to the cancer that had metastasised beyond control. I saw umma battle simultaneously with the trauma of finding out that her umma had late-stage breast cancer; the complete exhaustion from having to fly back and forth between Seoul and Toronto — about thirteen hours each way — with me and my sister; and the crippling anxiety that came from raising young children of eleven and eight in a strange place where we knew no one. All of this while appa stayed behind in Seoul as a ‘goose dad’.¹ Parents did this kind of stuff, too, I saw. The impossible stuff of unending sacrifice and infallible competency.

I became increasingly confident in my planned childlessness. Parenthood seemed like the most difficult thing in the world, and I didn’t want to sign up to do the most difficult thing in the world. Of course, I do have a lot of fond memories from my childhood, too, but when I think about the

¹ ‘Goose dads’ (gireogi appa) is a South Korean term that I grew up hearing often, because my dad was one. The term refers to a man who works in Korea while his wife and kids move abroad to stay, study, and live in an English-speaking country for the sake of the children’s education. Fluency in English is a highly desired and competitive skill in Korea and the phenomenon of goose dads goes to show the extent to which Korean parents will go — physical separation of the parents as a couple, financial, social, and cultural risks involved in women’s raising children in a foreign country by herself, etc. — to ensure a ‘better future’ for their children.

most momentous events that punctuated my childhood, they tend to be confusing, difficult, and scary. I hated that I didn't really know what was going on because no one would tell me anything; I hated how people spoke condescendingly slowly and loudly at umma because her English wasn't perfect; I hated a lot of things. I — as far as I can remember, really — always wished for a childless life that was full of dogs instead. Coincidentally, at 19, I found out that I had polycystic ovary syndrome. The gynaecologist who diagnosed me with the condition told me that I would most likely not be able to conceive naturally without medical intervention. I remember thinking to myself, 'well, that worked out all right for me'.

But now, in my late 20s — as my friends and colleagues around my age started having kids of their own, as more engagements and weddings and subsequent tiny children started featuring noticeably in my digital life through beautiful, curated photos and well-crafted captions — I found myself revisiting a question that I never thought I would: *do I want kids?* But I didn't end up having to spend a lot of time coming up with an answer to the question. I knew immediately, in my heart, that I do not want kids. I have never wavered on that. But then what was this weird feeling that crept up on me whenever I saw my friends' and acquaintances' pregnancy or birth announcements and professional photoshoots of their new-born babies? If I didn't want children and I was sure of it, why did I feel like I was falling behind, that I was doing something wrong? Then, I realised that I'd perhaps been asking myself the wrong question. The question that I needed to grapple with wasn't *do I want kids?* It was *should I want kids?*

What I was feeling wasn't really guilt about doing something wrong, but rather a hint of shame about my desire not to have children — as if I *should* want kids, as if I'm *supposed to* want to raise children because of all sorts of (normative) reasons that my halmoni endorsed and expected me to do so as well, like 'because that's a *natural* thing to want' and 'because children are *the future*'. These two particular reasons that I never really gave much thought to with regard to human children, however, often create a significant dissonance for me whenever Frank's honey-amber eyes meet mine; every time he welcomes me back home with his butt wiggling to the rhythm of his tippy-tappy toes against the hardwood floor in our flat; every time he rolls over in front of me, showing his belly to ask for some physical affection. In these moments, I feel that it is only *natural* that I call him, my

hairy, four-legged companion, my *big baby* as I talk in a voice that I only use when I address Frank. After all, “dogs have evolved an unusual sensitivity to human social information that makes them similar to infants” (Hare and Woods 2013, 59). But unlike human children, Frank does not shoulder the burden of *the future*. As Jane, a 30-something midwife who works for the NHS, said to me as I cradled Leonard, her long-haired chihuahua, in my arms just like a baby, “they’re babies forever”.

This chapter, then, explores this specific, but also very common and seemingly naturalised, form of multispecies kinship between dogs and their humans among the middle-class in Edinburgh: dogs as children who never grow up and their humans as their parents. Drawing from unstructured longform interviews with both people who have human children and people who don’t (for different reasons), I try to understand how dogs are — and are not — like human children in everyday lives in terms of material economies, care practices, affective-(para)linguistic practices, and species-specific temporality. I ask, in what ways are dogs similar to and different from human children and what does this reveal about the concept of parenthood/childhood? and what happens when the future we imagine and build for ‘the child’ is in fact one for the nonhuman child?

material economies of dog children

When I first met Laurie, a biracial Mexican-Irish woman who chose not to have human children (and in fact admitted that she was *horrified* by the mere thought of pregnancy), over the Internet, I was a bit nervous to be talking to someone I’d never met in person about such a sensitive topic as parenthood. But the nerves dissipated quickly once we started talking; she was nothing but approachable, hilarious, and chatty. All I needed to say was “tell me a little bit about you and your dogs” before she opened up and started telling me about her family’s history with dogs as well as her two pugs. She was truly an anxious and introverted ethnographer’s dream, especially in the difficult awkwardness of online conversations, not to mention between strangers who were united — sometimes only and rather tenuously — by their shared love of dogs.

When Laurie started listing all the things that she'd purchased for her dogs (nutritionally balanced (and costly) food, high-end treats, all the toys they could ask for, and temperature-regulating jacket that helped prevent brachycephalic (flat-nosed) breeds from overheating on warmer days), I was nodding along to the list of items until she got to "one of those baby bags", which made my ears perk up the way Frank's do when he hears something by the door — in concurrent alertness and curiosity. I had a bag dedicated for going out for longer walks with Frank, but it was just a small cross-body bag that could carry some treats and extra poop bags, not a baby bag. "I do actually get those nappy bags from the baby section. And it has everything that they might need", Laurie explained as if she noticed my expression of palpable interest. "I even have baby wipes", she said emphatically, "they're fantastic for cleaning things up on the spot". This immediately called to my mind something that I saw on a regular basis on the children's playground across the street from my flat, which is located in the neighbourhood that has been described to me by many as the 'posh part' of Edinburgh: chatty moms, mostly in their 30s and often sporting athleisure clothing, of young children, each with an enormous fabric bag — those "nappy bags from the baby section" — of various stuff for their kids hanging off their expensive strollers or on their shoulders.

Laurie told me that the bag and its assorted contents also came in handy when other dogs and their humans needed some parental help. She had bumped into a friend at a park recently when the friend's dog had just rolled in fox poop. Now, fox poop is notoriously stinky and intractably sticky, and it is a feared nightmare among many dog people, including myself. Her friend, who was washing her dog with bare hands in the stream, told Laurie that she could still *feel* the poop in her hands. That's when Laurie pulled out the baby wipes from the bag, helping her friend in a situation of need. I remembered seeing something similar to this on the children's playground, too: the moms to human children often shared their bagged materials — water, snacks, napkins, hand sanitisers, wet wipes, to name a few — with other moms in times of need. I wrote in my fieldnotes, 'evidently, things aren't so different in having dog children'. In this way, the materiality of the nappy bags and the baby wipes reified Laurie's dogs as children, as their mundane yet important role in the multispecies life of Laurie and her canine daughters highlighted the similarity between raising human and dog children.

Nadine was another participant whom I only had a chance to meet online due to the pandemic, but I'd been following her — or more precisely, her dog, Shelly — on Instagram for quite some time. Shelly was a very photogenic spaniel with her beautiful curls billowing in the wind, her chocolate brown tresses turning golden caramel when touched by light. Because I had already seen a lot of material things featured on Shelly's Instagram account — different kinds of treats, different harnesses, collars, jumpers, etc. — I wasn't surprised when Nadine made an immediate connection between her dog's status as her child and the stuff that she acquired for her. "I do baby her quite a lot. But she *is* my child. I spend pretty much all my money on her stuff", she laughed, a little bit at herself, a little bit about herself, and perhaps a little bit about dog parents' inclination to shell out large sums of money for anything for or related to their dogs. "I had a first birthday party for her at her day care. Loads of her doggy friends came around and they just ran around. They had such a good time". A huge grin appeared on Nadine's face from just remembering the event. "Well, she *is* my child. People do it for one-year-old kids who don't have a clue what's going on. So why can't I do it for my dog? And everyone's having fun". I nodded in agreement, thinking back to the small birthday party that I threw for Frank — although with just me and him in our flat — not even a month before this interview. Frank had turned five, and I got him a bunch of his favourite treats and a more comprehensive health insurance as his birthday present.

When I probed a little more about some other ways in which Shelly was her child, Nadine launched into an impassioned and motherly monologue without hesitation. "I'm always thinking 'what treats can I get Shelly?' or 'that'd be cute for Shelly' or 'Shelly needs a new toy'... to add to the fifty *million* she already has", she jokingly rolled her eyes at herself. With a beaming smile, she proceeded to tell me that she had purchased a lot of dog stuff in the first hours of the lockdown. "Honestly, the day that the lockdown was announced, literally that evening, I was on dog websites ordering fun stuff for her so that she had everything that she'd need for the lockdown. I got her new toys because I was like 'she will not suffer during lockdown! She's gonna have more treat toys;² I'm gonna prep them", there

² Treat toys refer to a specific kind of dog toy that is designed to dispense treats when interacted with in specific ways. For example, the Kong, a popular treat toy, can be stuffed with peanut butter (or anything of similar consistency that the dog enjoys), which is to be gradually licked out of the toy by the dog. There also exist more challenging toys that require a bit more finesse, such as some puzzle toys that require a dog to press a lever to open a lid covering the treat.

was determination and discipline in her voice. “She’s gonna have new treats, new toys. She’s gonna learn new tricks”.

I couldn’t help but smile while I listened to Nadine’s speech, as this was such a relatable experience (which, if I’m being honest, was a common occurrence throughout my fieldwork). I myself had done exactly the same thing for Frank, my dog, my child. I had hurriedly purchased a bunch of toys and treats in the first few days of the lockdown while also considering if I should stockpile some kibbles the way that people were stockpiling some non-perishable foods in the first wave of lockdown panic. Not only that, but Nadine’s gathering of materials in preparation for the lockdown reminded me of all the tweets that I saw from moms, mostly middle-class, who suddenly had to home-school their children due to the pandemic. They had purchased boundless amount of school supplies like books, binders, notebooks, pens, pencils, crayons, and erasers in addition to all the stuff for fun, including craft supplies, puzzles, and toys for their human children who were to be stuck at home during the lockdown — just like dog children and their parents that I’d come to know in Edinburgh.

The material things and practices involved in raising dog children thus highlighted the similarities between the role that human children and dog children played in their families. Dog people I spoke to thought of children — dog or human — not only as beings that cost money for the material goods they require, but also as economic persons who have material stakes within their kin relations. With the similarities in their material involvements to human kids’, then, dogs were cemented in their place and status as children in their multispecies families. Additionally, this similarity in materiality also highlighted that childhood is also about class and class-making: the taste, desire, and ability involved in deciding on and purchasing material commodities for their children — canine or hominid — not only constituted parenthood and childhood, but also produced and re-produced parenthood and childhood of specific class (see Carsten et al. 2021 for the argument that marriage is a phenomenon that similarly reveals something about class and class-making). But this will be discussed further and in more detail in the chapter on the economies of more-than-human kinship through the lens of *habitus* that manages the household/kinship in class-specific ways.

In addition to the similarities in material practices, dog children also elicited and received care that their human parents likened to the kinds of care practices associated with human children. The two ethnographic examples I share in this section illustrated specific kinds of protective bodily care that my participants naturalised as something that parents should practice with their children and something that children deserved, as their “innocence solicits our defense” (Edelman 2004, 2). Here, I am reminded of one of my participants’ quick but effective descriptions. Agatha, a 20-something Australian ‘dog mum’ to Paulie, and with no desire to have human children, said to me during our interview in her flat, “Some people are just not born with maternal instincts. But with a dog, like, when they make that yelping noise, I’m just like ‘oh my gosh, what’s wrong!’”, dramatically simulating serious concern toward a hypothetical dog in distress. She felt that their innocent little yelp, a pure expression of pain, fear, and/or startle, tugged at her heartstrings, eliciting care from her. To Agatha, her reaction toward hearing a yelp from a dog was what made her a mother despite not having been “born with maternal instincts”.

Sometimes, the kinds of care provided toward dog children involved physical hardship and endurance. I asked Sandra, an infertile and (human)childless woman in her late 30s whom I’d already met multiple times and interviewed before, if she’d be interested in being my first virtual interviewee in late March 2020. I don’t think I’ve ever had such an enthusiastic yes to an interview request. She and I had first met at an in-person meet-up long before the pandemic and even before my fieldwork started. Over time, we kept in touch on Instagram and bonded over our infertility and love of our dog children, Forest and Frank, who got along with one another incredibly well. During the interview, Sandra hesitantly called herself ‘Forest’s mum’, and rubbed her chest, the seat of her heart, as she described her love toward Forest as “fierce”. She even suggested that if Forest jumped into icy water, she would go in without any hesitation. “Even if it’s risking your own life, you wouldn’t even think about it”, she said, and added that she’d “bloody hope” that other dog people would do the same for their dogs, which provided a glimpse into the normative expectation that parents would risk a whole lot of things for their children.

I saw her practice this kind of protective care once the lockdown restrictions eased a bit and we were able to meet up for a walk on a beautiful summer's day. We met at Yellowcraig Beach, about a 30-minute train ride away from Edinburgh, and started walking along the shore. Forest and Frank revelled in their reunion after not having seen each other for almost a year since our first interview, which took place in person back in November 2019. Sandra and I watched the dogs play chase as they splashed around, leaving their pawprints on the sandy surface that quickly disappeared with the ebbs and flows of the water. But this peace only lasted so long. Forest spotted something on the hill far from the shore and sprinted toward it, disappearing into the long grass and spiky plants on the steep mound.

We expected Forest to return of his own accord, but after a few minutes, we decided to go after him. "Forest! Where are you?" Sandra and I called out, but to no avail. Upon getting no sign of Forest anywhere nearby, Sandra jumped to more serious action. She waded through the sharp grass and climbed straight into the thorny bushes, calling Forest's name. I joined her, figuring that two sets of eyes would be better than just one. Frank followed me around for a bit but soon got bored and went to find a shady area to cool down in. "Stay here", I told him, hoping that he was maybe tired enough to stay put for a little bit while I helped Sandra with her search for her dog child. He glanced at me with his tongue hanging out of his mouth, panting and smiling as if to say 'okay, go on, then; don't worry about me'. Talking to Frank in this way felt like interacting with a teenager who can stay put and remain somewhat responsible by himself — a child, still, but one that I could trust not to run away into the bushes.

It took us a good while — over ten minutes, though it felt longer due to the increasing panic with every minute that passed — of getting jabbed and stabbed by all kinds of plants before Forest, oblivious and happy, reappeared from the shrubbery. "There you are!", Sandra said with audible relief in her voice while she clipped the lead on to his harness. As all four of us descended from the small hill and re-emerged on to the beach, I noticed the havoc that the prickly plants had wreaked on Sandra's legs. The thorns and spikes had broken skin in multiple areas of her bare skin, some scratches even trickling droplets of blood and others swelling with angry redness. But Sandra didn't

seem to be fazed by any of this. This was her motherly duty toward Forest, just another — and thankfully a little less life-threatening — version of jumping into icy waters to rescue her child.

Nora, a 30-something Dutch woman who invited me into her home for an interview in early January 2020, shared a story with me that was a bit scarier than Sandra’s venture into the bushes. While Zelda, her tiny sausage dog, busied herself with licking my face while she stood on the dining table as if nothing had happened, Nora recounted the time when Zelda was treated “like a tug toy” by a bigger dog. “So, we’d always take the lift because Zelda can’t really walk on stairs [due to the shape of her horizontally long but vertically short dachshund body], and we were taking the lift down, and the dog just jumped on Zelda. The dog grabbed her by the neck and started shaking her”, the warm smile that she greeted me with faded as she was haunted by this harrowing experience. “And she was just *screaming*. I first tried to get in between them with my leg, but it didn’t work. So, I put my fist in the dog’s mouth so that he couldn’t close it. I broke my arm. He had a good bite. They put her on oxygen for 24 hours because her lungs were perforated. It was really serious. It was awful. I was so happy she was alive”, she said, showing me the scar that this terrifying incident has left on her body. To Nora, this noticeably deep scar wasn’t just a reminder of the horror. It was also a battle scar that proved her motherhood. “That was the moment that I was like, ‘I’m a good mom. I can protect my own’”, she said proudly. Zelda made her way back to Nora — back to her mom — for a cuddle. “Yeah, my baby!”, she exclaimed, softly caressing Zelda’s tiny body.

This story instantaneously reminded me of an event from my own childhood. Umma, my younger sister, and I had just migrated to Toronto from Seoul, and we started making a habit of going for a walk together in the evening to acquaint ourselves with our new neighbourhood. It was a cool summer’s evening, and we’d ventured into a beautiful cul-de-sac with sizeable trees that lined each side of the street. Suddenly, a big lanky dog — an Irish wolfhound puppy, if I remember correctly — came out of nowhere and ran toward my sister, who was only eight years old at the time, and jumped on her, nipping and scratching at her with excitement. My sister was never a huge fan of dogs the way I was, and being a small child at the time, she was terrified and started crying in fear. Umma didn’t hesitate for a moment before she put herself between my sister and the dog, becoming

a physical barrier that took on the nipping and the scratching so that my sister wouldn't be harmed. In hindsight, I know now that the dog wasn't intending any harm; there were no teeth baring, growling, or any other behaviour that was normally associated with aggression. He was just a poorly trained puppy with irresponsible humans who let him off on to the street without supervision. But that's beside the point. My sister was so scared, and umma saw it as her motherly responsibility to protect her child even if it brought harm to her own body, just as Nora saw it as her motherly duty to protect Zelda even at her own bodily cost.

The way that Sandra leapt into the sharp shrubs to find Forest, the way that Nora used her own arm as a shield to protect Zelda, and the way that umma got herself between my sister and the dog had in common this impetus to protect, even when this protection came at a cost to their own bodies. This sense of protectiveness brought dogs and human kids together under the umbrella of childhood — they were children, regardless of species, in that they were seen as beings who deserved (sacrificial) protection from their parents.

affective (para)linguistic practices with dog children

On a warm and sunny day in late summer 2020, Frank and I went for an easy stroll through the Braids, our favourite walking path in Edinburgh. The sun shone through the lush leaves that shielded us from the busy realities of the city, hitting scattered areas of the unpaved ground and the creek next to the path, making the water shimmer as it reflected some of the sunlight. Mustard yellow and sage green lichen covered the tree trunks surrounding us; soft, spongy patches of moss were sprouting their seta tipped with red capsule ready to release the spores and widen their reach in the forest. Faint screeching noises from human children splashing around in the creek echoed in the air. With my good-mood music playing through my headphones, I basked in the gloriously verdant atmosphere of the forested path while Frank pranced ahead of me to sniff a tree that must've been a popular toilet for the canine visitors.

Then I heard a slightly panicked voice, calling out after a dog — in gradually increasing volume — that appeared in front of us out of nowhere: “Max! Max! Max!” Max was a wiry black and white collie who looked like a thinner, younger version of Frank. Max completely ignored his human and her desperate call and ran toward Frank whose ears immediately found their way back to his head in slight caution at the puppy energy that Max exuded. Max’s human, who eventually caught up to Max, and I watched Max and Frank circle around each other with their noses pointed at each other’s butts until both their tails started wagging in the air. “They’re just like children, aren’t they?”, she exclaimed as we walked past each other as Max eventually lost interest in Frank and continued to do his own thing, ignoring everything but whatever was immediately in front of his nose, which was glued to the ground.

These instances of linguistic analogisation of a dog to a child — which, I suppose, was the most obvious way in which humans conferred the status of children to their dogs — occurred frequently, and perhaps more importantly, quite *naturally*, among most of my participants (see Ringrose 2015 who found that humans can’t really help but change the very pitch of their voice when they speak to dogs). Anouk, a 40-something white woman from Zimbabwe who has a human daughter who was three years old at the time of our interview in January 2020, humorously called her elderly terrier Frisky her ‘firstborn’. She told me that she resisted calling him a ‘fur baby’, a popularised term referring to pets, but the fact that she was holding him in her lap like she would a baby indicated that he undeniably occupied the role of her firstborn, even if the sickly-sweet term ‘fur baby’ wasn’t to Anouk’s liking. She caressed him with such tenderness for the duration of the interview that by the end of it, my cheeks hurt from smiling at the sensitive affection between the two of them.

Sandra speculated that human-childless people may especially be prone to analogising between dogs and human children because “if you don’t have [human] kids, there’s a tendency to love your dog more because you have more time and energy to — where else are you gonna put that potential love? It’s gotta go somewhere”. Laurie, who I introduced in the previous section in the chapter, immediately referred to her two pugs as her “daughters” and her “kids” when we first met for our virtual interview. Her brachycephalic (flat-faced) canine daughters crawled over her lap as soon as she relocated from her office desk to the couch, pouring kisses all over her face while their corkscrew

tails wiggled with excitement. Elena, a middle-aged white Scottish woman who admitted to never having had “the biological clock” for human children, referred to her rambunctious and vocal whippets as “my boys” with no hesitation. Sean, a white English man in his early 50s, whom I admittedly did not expect would be the type to baby his dog because of his gender and age, couldn’t stop gushing about Ollie, his young staffy (Staffordshire terrier) puppy: “As you can see, daddy loves him”, he said, giving his bat-eared baby a big hug as he jumped up on to the bench to be next to him. “All he wants to do is sleep and cuddle up to daddy. You may see a lot of cute dogs, but this is my baby”, he beamed with pride.

In this way, the use of parent/child language was so common that throughout my fieldwork, I ended up compiling a small lexicon of kinship terminologies used by my participants (including myself), which I hope is as useful as it is amusing, providing a helpful and humorous guide to the rest of the chapter. I have marked the affective inflections in [square brackets]:

- ◆ She is my child [very seriously]
- ◆ My whole world [describing the dog, almost teary-eyed]
- ◆ My boys [with a tone of resignation of a mother with two naughty boys]
- ◆ My daughters [with pride]
- ◆ Baby replacement [lovingly]
- ◆ Still a baby! [to a fully grown four-year-old dog]
- ◆ Bestest girl [in baby voice]
- ◆ Such an only child! [describing her dog who plays by his own rules and nobody else’s]
- ◆ It’s like having a child [looking at the dog who got stuck under a coffee table]
- ◆ My baby! [caressing the dog, remembering the time she got bitten by another dog trying to protect her own dog]
- ◆ Pretty much a child [content with the comparison of her dog to her human children]
- ◆ My firstborn [holding the dog like a baby]
- ◆ I’m totally his dog mom [with a sense of duty and humour]
- ◆ Oh, my children! [addressing the dogs, with love, a bit of drama]

- ◆ Son! [addressing the dog]
- ◆ They're just like children that never grow up and need you forever [with radiating warmth]



fig. 10 – Frisky, Anouk’s “first-born”



Ollie, Sean’s “daddy’s boy”

The linguistic practices extended beyond the lexical comparison of calling a dog a child/daughter/son/baby; the paralinguistic ways in which people communicated verbally with their dogs reflected certain parental affects that pushed the parallel between dogs and human children even further. Some of the (para)linguistic similarities between ‘doggerel’ — dog-directed speech from dog people — and ‘motherese’ — baby-directed speech from mothers — have been studied by Hirsh-Pasek and Treiman (1982), showing how the ways in which humans speak to their human children are strikingly similar to the ways in which they speak to their dogs. For example, dog-directed speech tended to be shorter in length, more commonly an imperative (command) or a question — including “tag questions such as *You’re sleepy, aren’t you?*” (Hirsh-Pasek and Treiman 1982) — than a declaration, almost always in present tense, and often repetitive and sometimes even imitative in nature.

I consistently witnessed these parallels first-hand in my fieldwork. My human participants rarely spoke to their dogs in lengthy, declarative sentences, instead opting for telling or asking them to do

something in a short and to-the-point manner (e.g., ‘sit!’ or ‘can you give me a paw?’ for a treat or praise in training or ‘do you want to go for a walk?’, which almost always elicits an excited response). Most verbs were in present tense, including ‘I love you’, ‘you are so spoiled’, and ‘you are so cute’, to list just a few from a very long list of present-tense phrases directed at dogs. Tag questions following a declaration were also common (e.g., ‘you’re perfect, aren’t you!’ or my personal favourite toward Frank, ‘you’re such a good boy, isn’t that right?’). Additionally, there were also a whole lot of ‘baby talk’ involved, which included a lot of repetition of words (e.g., ‘you want some *tweats* (‘treats’ in baby talk)? *Tweats!* Yeah, *tweats!*’) as well as imitation of the various sounds that dogs made when they stretched, yawned, grumbled, or barked, which consisted of an array of tremendously entertaining racket.

As amusing as these similarities are, however, I want to focus on Hirsh-Pasek and Treiman’s main argument that doggerel/motherese is “triggered by the social responsiveness of the listener, be it child or dog” (1982, 237) — that is, humans speak to dogs (or, their dog children) in a parental kind of way not because dogs share similar cognitive or intellectual characteristics to human children, but rather because they elicit and respond to certain social, and thus necessarily affective, desires. Certainly, these (para)linguistic practices involved in dog-directed speech were accompanied by specific affects that led me to see the kind of relationship that many of my human and canine participants had as one between parents and their children.

These affects varied in their nature, though all were reminiscent of the feelings involved in a parent-child relationship, such as *joy* from seeing a child thrive or receiving affection from them, or *sternness* from having to impose some form of discipline and rule. I remember when Sean talked about Ollie as his baby while referring to himself as ‘daddy’ with no hesitation. His eyes twinkled with delight and his ear-to-ear smile never left his face. Sean planted gentle kisses on his velvety head between his big, floppy ears. As he told me that Ollie comfortably takes up two thirds of the bed while he was pushed to the side, Sean laughed uproariously. Ollie looked at Sean like he knew we were talking about him, prompting a parental response from Sean, who looked back at him and patted his muscular shoulder coated in short and glossy black hair. “Your daddy’s a big softy”, he said to Ollie,

and in that moment, a moment saturated with warmth and adoration, I felt and knew without a doubt that Ollie was really his child, and he was really Ollie's 'daddy'.

But of course, joy wasn't the only feeling involved in parenting a dog child — or any child, for that matter. When Laurie and I hopped on to our video call, she was initially in her makeshift home office, a windowless closet that had been transformed into a serviceable workspace in COVID times. But within the first ten minutes, the distant barking from her two pug daughters travelled from her laptop's microphone to my laptop's speaker, and she informed me that her dogs were in the kitchen behind the baby gate. She eventually relocated to the couch when the barking did not subside, carrying her laptop in one hand toward the kitchen/living room area. I made a mental note then that this was so much like a mother attending to her crying (human) babies. The distinctive pug barking — imagine barking, but with a heavy-smoker-like raspiness — quickly turned into excited whimpering as the dogs saw Laurie enter their field of vision.

“No, we must work on this separation anxiety — for both of us!”, she said to Tequila and Fajita, her two dogs, in a stern yet motherly voice. I was sure this tone of voice was something that Frank was familiar with, too; I often put on this specific tone whenever I had to enforce a house rule that he was breaking or reinforce a training exercise that he struggled with. “I'm talking about you as my children, and you're just barking like lunatics!” The dogs didn't seem fazed at all by being told off, though, as they crawled on to Laurie's lap with childlike innocence. Once the dogs settled down a little, Laurie shifted her attention back to the computer screen, and let out a little sigh of relief and smiled as the peaceful silence eventually replaced the frenzy of barking, whimpering, and grumbling. “So yeah, you get to meet my daughters”, she said as she made the first official introduction to Tequila, the younger fawn pug, and Fajita, the older black pug. She looked at them dotingly, her eyes shifting between her canine daughters and me on the laptop monitor intermittently. Even with their neediness and separation anxiety that caused a bit of annoyance and frustration (especially as they interrupted the interview quite a few times), Laurie never wavered in her parental love toward her wrinkly and wiggly canine daughters.

I also felt a similarly strange combination of slight weariness, disquiet, and love during my interview with Elena, a white woman in her 50s who admitted that she “never had the biological clock for” human children. She shared a story about her whippets — whom she referred to as “bitey wee horrors” at some point during our interview in her beautiful dining room — that took me by surprise: they had attacked a Westie (West Highland white terrier, a small white dog) a little over a month or so before our interview took place, inflicting an injury serious enough to send her to the vet. “Fortunately, the family [of the Westie that they attacked] didn’t want to report them to the police, but they had every right to. But we told them obviously we were going to pay the vet bill, and we’ll get muzzles for the dogs, because we can’t have that happen again”, Elena had a serious look of trepidation while she recalled the event.

But this fearful worry she expressed inseparably coalesced with deep feelings of love: “I didn’t know what would happen if they were to report them. Would they have to go to quarantine for 14 days? I didn’t know. Then, I...”, she trailed off for a few seconds and let out a deep sigh, getting emotional at the thought of being separated from her dogs — her *children*. “I couldn’t even *think* of how I would feel, with them being taken away. So, we were like ‘whatever you want us to do, we’ll do it’. So yeah, as much as we say ‘oh, they’re awful’, they are *my boys*”. She glanced at Charlie, one of her boys, who sat by the radiator, snoozing peacefully without a care in the world — just as a child oblivious to their wrongdoings would. Steve, the other ‘bitey wee horror’, came up to Elena and put his paws up on her lap, giving her kisses. “Yeah, who would’ve thought you would try to kill a Westie!”, she smiled and called him a good boy while looking into what she called his unbelievably adorable ‘seal pup eyes’ that really tugged at the heartstrings.

Interestingly, the linguistic practice with dog children extended beyond speech to written language, too. Mhairi, a woman in her 50s who has a golden retriever named Harper who she considers to be her (very spoiled) child, laughed when I asked her whether her husband also considers Harper to be his child, and said, “yeah, let’s put it this way — he gets Father’s Day cards. So, yes, he does. He’ll get a gift for Father’s Day and a card for Father’s Day”. I initially chuckled at the thought of writing a card to someone from Frank’s perspective, but quickly remembered that actually, I have written a lot of things from Frank’s perspective, including captions to some photos that I posted on Instagram

or sent to my friends and family via text, and, indeed, a goodbye card to Bella and her dog child Jasper who moved back to the US at the end of Bella's veterinary school studies. I remember signing my name and then Frank's name right next to it, and putting a cutesy little love heart shaped kind of like a dog's nose at the end.

Seeing these linguistic and affective practices surrounding dog children, I started understanding the 'child' — at least among my human participants who considered themselves dog 'parents' — as a category characterised by what I want to cautiously call 'unconditional love'. As Sandra said while she told me about the behavioural difficulties she was facing with Forest, "children can drive you potty, but you love them *no matter what*". The fact that Ollie shamelessly took up two thirds of their bed, or that Fajita and Tequila were tantrum-prone drama queens who barked their heads off for being left alone for just a few minutes, or that Charlie and Steve tried to ruthlessly slaughter another dog, or, certainly, that they all had four legs and a tail and were covered in fur somehow never got in the way of their humans' thinking of them or referring to them as their children (and in fact, the species difference seemed to actually help for humans who never wanted human children in the first place). With dogs and their humans who considered themselves to be their parents, then, the concepts of 'child' and 'parents' themselves were predicated on the affective responses that their dogs elicited despite the conditions attached to the dogs, including the hard-to-ignore condition that they were, in fact, dogs.

dog children and their (queer?!) differences

"... queer as not about who you're having sex with, ... but queer as being about the self that is at odds with everything around it and has to invent and create and find a place to speak and to thrive and to live".

– bell hooks (2014)

In seeing, hearing, and thinking about the palpable similarities between dog children and human children in material, bodily, and linguistic practices, I started questioning what it means to be a

parent and what it means to be a child. I became more curious about ‘parent’ and ‘child’ as culturally specific categories in Scotland and the UK that carried certain affectively normative notions with them rather than as kinship roles based on blood, biogenetic connections, and genealogy, which necessarily confined kin relations to an intraspecies domain. Dog children, then, compelled an interesting expansion to the very figure of the child: while they were extraordinarily similar to human children in their evocation of certain affects and practices associated with intraspecies parent/child kinship between human parents and human children, they were clearly not human. But what were the dissimilarities between human and dog children that stemmed from this species difference, and what implications did these dissimilarities have for what it means to be a child?

One of the most common and obvious divergences between human and dog children that my human participants brought up was that dog children weren’t birthed by humans, especially as a means of leaving a legacy into the future. Recall what Jane, a 30-something midwife who has two tiny chihuahuas, said: “they’re babies forever”. That is, dogs, although incredibly similar to human children in many ways, sit (and stay, if I may borrow a popular dog training sequence of ‘sit-stay’) outside of what the literary critic and queer theorist Lee Edelman (2004) called ‘reproductive futurism’ wherein the figure of the Child serves as “the fetishistic fixation of heteronormativity” (2004, 21) as well as “the material embodiment of futurism” (58). Edelman further pointed out that “throughout the West, we are ordered, each and every one, to attend to the birth of the Child” (2004, 41), that we are conditioned and obligated to feel invested in the production and reproduction of this figure of the Child, precisely because (human) children represent the future of our species, *Homo sapiens*, itself.

This brings me back to the reasons why I felt pressured to have kids that I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter — because a child was a ‘natural’ thing to want and that children are the ‘future’. Indeed, children were “a figure of *naturalization*” (Edelman 2004, 57, original emphasis) as a product of “pro-procreative prejudice ... through which desiring subjects assume a stake in a future” (2004, 53). They represented the very concept of future itself. Only by reproducing, by participating in this specific brand of futurism that was invested in heteronormative legacy-making, did it seem like I was allowed a future — a future that I knew I didn’t want and couldn’t have.

But dog children opened up “the possibility of a queer resistance to this [normative] organizing principle” (Edelman 2004, 2). As they were not a product of heterosexual human reproduction yet still occupied the role of the child in multispecies families, they lay outside the reproductive futuristic norm that “generates generational succession, temporality, and narrative sequence, not toward the end of enabling change, but instead, of perpetuating sameness” (Edelman 2004, 60) with and through the figure of the Child rather than actual living children. Or, as Agatha — who expressed that she did not want children, did not want to find out what it’s like to have children, and did not “want to resent it” — put it, “kids, it’s something you create and it’s your job to make sure that they are good member of society and not a complete psycho. It’s not like a dog that you didn’t make yourself”. To her, human children, because they are made by other humans with a vested interest in continuation of the self through something made of themselves, they were also burdened with the responsibility to carry society forward as a ‘good member’ of it, while dogs, in her words, “won’t last for a very long time”.

With their obvious species difference from human children, dog children, then, expose “the obliquity of our relation to what we experience in and as social reality, alerting us to the fantasies structurally necessary in order to sustain it and engaging those fantasies through the figural logics, the linguistic structures, that shape them” (Edelman 2004, 6–7). That is, dog children are ‘queer’ children who can nudge us toward the realisation that the heteronormative reproductive futuristic fantasies are just that — fantasies.

And the temporal difference between human and dog children becomes crucial here: dog children do not tend to outlive us the way human children do or are at least expected to do — dogs “won’t last for a long time”, as Agatha said. Dog children make it quite impossible to fantasise about them as our futures because as humans, we (unfortunately) expect to experience our dog children’s death in our lifetime; that is, they aren’t oriented toward the future. In relating to dogs as children while also being (pain)fully aware of their too-short time with us, the temporal focus of ‘childhood’ shifts from futurity to the present. Dog children, who stay babies all their short lives, thus evade the normative figure of the child while challenging “the figure of this child [that] seems to shimmer with the

iridescent promise of Noah's rainbow, serving, like the rainbow, as the pledge of a covenant to shield us against the threat of apocalypse now — or apocalypse later" (Edelman 1998, 24).

Edelman's theory that ties 'the child' and 'the future' together have anthropological significance, too: as Strathern (1992b) wrote, kinship contains "certain ideas about the passage of time, relations between generations, and, above all, about the future" (1992b, 5), which actually belongs in the present, as the ideas about the future "are what we imagine for ourselves now" (1992b, 5) and never reflect exactly what the future is really to be. Dog children, then, are interesting and perhaps unexpected allies in the project against reproductive futurism, allowing us to imagine otherwise by refusing the future-centric "insistence of hope itself as affirmation, which is always an affirmation of an order whose refusal will register as unthinkable, irresponsible, inhumane" (Edelman 2004, 4).

This queer challenge that dog children pose is an important one that concerns matters of multispecies care. Edelman (2004) wrote that while futurism "always anticipates, in the image of the Imaginary past, a realization of meaning that will suture identity by closing that gap, queerness undoes the identities through which we experience ourselves as subjects, insisting on the Real of a *jouissance* that social reality and the futurism on which it relies have already foreclosed" (2004, 24–25, emphasis added). In other words, dog children unfold the enjoyment of the present that is "beyond the bounds of identity, meaning, and law" (2004, 25). This present-focused enjoyment is "never a matter of being or becoming but, rather, of *embodying*" (2004, 25, original emphasis), existing as subjects whose affective bodies have the capacity to experience, to feel. *Jouissance* in multispecies kinship with dogs thus affirms nonreproductive kinship as feasible, responsible (or, as Haraway deconstructed, response-able), and caring.

This *jouissance* informed the particular ways in which humans parented and cared for their dog children. Because the non-normative/queer temporality that humans shared with their dog children was not oriented toward the heterosexual reproduction of futurity, dog parents learned to adapt their care of dog children toward the 'right here, right now', rather than in the idealised future where human children were expected to grow up, achieve independence, and reify the idealised future themselves by participating in the practice of making heterosexual, reproductive, nuclear family. As

Bella, a veterinary student in her late 20s, told me in her living room as we watched our dogs — our children — wrestle and tumble, “I used to only feed Jasper dog food, but then my mom was like, ‘he’s such a good dog and they only live so short!’ and I was like, ‘you’re right; they deserve it’”. She then tossed them some pizza crust as they took a break from their roughhousing. Similarly, Keira, a care worker in her 50s who has grown-up, adult human children who have all become independent and moved out, said that she spoiled Sadie, her dog child who joined her family due to her empty nest syndrome, with all kinds of toys and treats. In fact, she went so far as to say that the very reason why humans get dogs is to spoil them.

Despite these differences, there is something to be said about how easily and naturally dogs fit into the role of the child. Edelman (2004) reminded us that “queerness attains its ethical value precisely insofar as it accedes to that place, accepting its figural status as resistance to the viability of the social while insisting on the inextricability of such resistance from every social structure” (2004, 3) — that is, one cannot extricate ‘queer’ from ‘normal’, as ‘queer’ depends on the very existence of norms to resist and exist against. It perhaps makes sense, then, that dog children are both queer in that they resist the heteronormative reproductive futurism and not queer in that they fit quite neatly into the role of children in their multitude of similarities they share with human children. After all, dog children shared with human children “the figural logics [and] the linguistic structures” (Edelman 2004, 6–7) that make human children the representative symbol of the future.

But queer or not, I want to end this chapter by arguing that taking the dog’s role as children seriously inspires us think differently — non-normatively — about the cultural figure of ‘the child’. While the material things, care practices, as well as the language (and its affects) of kinship that dog parents use with their dog children may be similar to those that people share and use with their human children (and thus produce and reproduce dogs as children), the difference between our species, especially in terms of temporality, helps us think beyond the normative notions of ‘childhood’ as an analytic category that ties the notion of futurity to the figure of ‘the child’, an idealised symbol and a pedestalsed figure rather than an actual child. The liminality of dogs (as entities that can be both queer and normative, both like and unlike human children) allows us to imagine differently about kin-making, childhood, and future. Perhaps, then, with dog children, we

can imagine queer futures that are oriented towards the non-human — futures that cut across species and blood ties, which in turn help us re-think what it means to be kin, as well as what it means to be a child, what it means to be a parent.

Forest

Forest travelled a long way to get to Sandra, his human. On what the rescue called the ‘freedom bus’ (which was a transit van), Forest was confined to a crate, driven from north of Spain to Edinburgh over three days with a bunch of other stressed-out dogs. While it was DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs)-approved, the trip was hard on Forest, who was then just a puppy of six months, unaware of what was happening. He arrived as a pup who was petrified of sliding doors on vans — among many other things that he encountered on his way to Edinburgh.



fig. 11 – Forest and Sandra / Sandra, Forest, and Frank

These experiences affected Forest in profound ways. At just over one year old, his eyes are wise beyond his years. They tell me that he’s lived a thousand years, that he’s seen things. He is still fearful of many things, even things that most other dogs wouldn’t stop to think twice about — like

people using walking sticks or a piece of cardboard on the ground. Compounded with the pain from his bad hip joints, the world is often a scary and painful place for Forest.

But with Sandra and her unending love and patience, Forest is always learning to be more courageous than the day before. He enjoyed running at full speed and kicking up some damp sand into the strong, salty gust of Portobello (which blew in our faces, but *c'est la vie* with dogs). He said hello to so many other dogs on the beach, circling around with their noses following each other's butts. And when he got startled by something, instead of having a panic attack — lunging and barking — he went to his safe place, sitting between Sandra's feet.

When Sandra and I sat down at a café nearby to chat after our walk on the beach, it wasn't long before the dogs settled down in a peculiar but endearing way. Forest used Frank's tail as his pillow while Frank used Forest's foot as his pillow. They snored in synchronised rhythms, their relaxed bodies touching in ways that only dogs who trusted each other would. Sandra and I just watched them with big, goofy grins on our faces for a little while in silence that was sprinkled with the comforting drones coming from the two awkwardly cuddling dogs.



fig. 12 – dachshund people and their dachshund-people-ness through home décor.

4 / managing kinship with more-than-human economies

The flat that I share with Frank in the quiet and peaceful (if not a little bit boring at times) — and extremely middle-class — Morningside is a small, north-facing one-bedroom tenement flat. I signed the lease for the flat long before having seen it or the neighbourhood in person. I'd heard from various sources, both acquaintances and strangers online, that finding a flat to rent was a nightmarish undertaking in Edinburgh, especially around the time I was looking to move (August, at the start of the Fringe Festival, which can triple the population of the city for the month) *and* with a dog, so I started looking early and eagerly. When I saw that a dog-friendly flat became available for a move-in date that met my visa requirements, I decided to take my chances and signed the lease in the form of a PDF document from my bed in Toronto even though I knew close to nothing about Edinburgh or Morningside. I have been told by almost everyone I'd spoken to about finding this flat that I was extremely lucky to have found a flat to rent in a 'good' neighbourhood at a price under my budget — and, especially in hindsight, I am inclined to agree.

The flat is situated across the street from a very well-maintained cemetery that houses a war grave that functions as a popular dog-walking area and next to it, a local park with a small, curated garden, a large patch of grass that accommodates many dogs daily, a basketball court, a tennis court, and a large children's playground. To the back of the building is a railway line that only services occasional freight trains with no passengers. The street is quiet most of the time — even though it offers free parking on both sides — perhaps due to having two care homes as well as the cemetery. The biggest 'disturbances' in the neighbourhood tend to be unruly young children who don't quite have the spatial awareness yet, teenagers playing their music out loud from a speaker, take-away delivery motorcycles, and sometimes, speeding cars in the evening. Rogue graffiti or spray-painted tags get pressure-hosed off or painted over in no more than a day or two; there is rarely any litter on the streets; lost pieces of clothing, reusable water bottles, backpacks, spare dog leads, pouches of dog treats, and sometimes even housekeys wait for their owners on the metal fences in the park or notice board posts in the cemetery that have bolted metal plate signs that remind people to clean up after their dogs, that there is a fine for failing to pick up dog poop. The neighbourhood — the immediate

habitat (*oikos*) for me and Frank — does have a sense of pristine neighbourliness that coexists with aesthetic intolerance in its maintenance and management, a *habitus* of sorts that brings people together in their shared environment and treatment thereof based on a shared *taste*, and in turn, *class* (Bourdieu 1984).

The flat itself is perhaps a little less manicured than the neighbourhood, but it is still curated and managed with care — more specifically, care for Frank and me, as individual bodies and as entangled bodies, a team, involved in our kinship. It is strewn with dog stuff, especially in the living room where Frank spends most of his time. His bowls, treats, chews, foods, toys, bedding, and clothing are scattered around the room amongst my things in a living constellation that Frank and I order and organise as we see fit. As they get moved about, the flat changes the shape of its “contingent tableau” (Bennett 2020, 5) made of various inanimate things, all of which have ‘thing-power’, “the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle” (Bennett 2020, 6). These things, material results of a “set of ‘choices’ constituting life-styles” (Bourdieu 1984, 171), not only display our taste and class, but have also built personal ties between me and Frank by compelling actions and reactions through their materialities (Bennett 2020; Tsing 2015): the £20 dog blanket I acquired from John Lewis demands to be folded a certain way by me,¹ while it demands to be crumpled up a certain other way by Frank; Frank’s bowls call me forth to fill them up with dog food twice a day, while they draw Frank in to dive in nose first. In our biotic and abiotic moving constellations, we make our home, our *oikos* and *domus*.

The *domus* — Latin for ‘house’ or ‘home’, which forms the root word for ‘domestication’ — then, involves and contains not only animate beings like Frank and me, but also inanimate things that have specific histories of how they have come to form the living arrangements in the home. And as such, they are also implicated in multispecies *economies* in which they are not just passively consumed products of capitalism, but agents who partake in certain kinds of care and responsibility with dogs and their humans — the kinds often focused on continuous maintenance and repair of our shared worlds that implicate other beings (Tronto 1993) as well as constant engagement in and

¹ John Lewis is a department store that tends to stock high-end retail brands. A headline to a satire article from *The Daily Mash* sums it up well: “No point being middle class without John Lewis, Britain agrees” (The Daily Mash 2021).

with our responsibility (or response-ability), our shared ability to *respond* to one another (Haraway 2016).

This chapter explores some of the ways in which dogs and dog stuff figure in, create, and influence different kinds of economies — the management (*nemo*, to manage) of the *oikos*, the household, home, habitat. I show that “the hypercommodified, information-saturated, performance-driven conditions of late capitalism” (Ngai 2012, 1) and moral and affective economies of care and responsibility manifest simultaneously in mundane multispecies contexts and engagements that involve both animate and inanimate bodies in constant conversation. Drawing from multiple disciplines through the works of political theorist Jane Bennett (2010), cultural theorist Sianne Ngai (2012), anthropologist Anna Tsing (2015), feminist scholar Donna Haraway (2003; 2016), and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984), I challenge and expand on the understanding of ‘economy’ as a strictly human system of production and consumption: by incorporating the interconnected networks in which dogs and their humans act together as co-evolving species to influence decisions concerning the *oikos* (see Ingold 2016) — the household, the habitat, and, I argue, kinship.

managing the bodies in multispecies kinship

Like most things in life under capitalism, dogs cost money. Dogs themselves are rarely free, and the price may range widely and wildly, largely depending on the breed and the breeder, as well as the specific spatial and temporal context.² But keeping a dog alive and well also costs money in an ongoing way — and lots more than acquiring a dog: to care for dogs, to feed them nourishing foods, to provide them with regular and adequate healthcare, to entertain them with various toys and activities, and to equip them with appropriate accoutrements to clothe and protect their bodies against all kinds of muck that can sometimes even pose infection risks. I recall a humorous but telling occurrence at a pet supply store: a small child and her mother who were shopping for cat food walked up to Frank, who was happy to greet them with his tail ‘helicoptering’ in excitement. The

² During the pandemic-induced lockdown, prices of puppies (especially of popular breeds) in the UK have gone up significantly due to the soaring demand for a companion animal (Watson 2020).

child asked her mother, “mom, can we get a puppy?”, to which the mother responded “I’m afraid not; they cost a lot of money — they need a lot more food and stuff than cats, you know? Do you know how much we’d need for a dog?” The child didn’t miss a beat and answered, “I don’t know, twenty thousand pounds?” Everyone in the earshot burst out laughing, including the store clerk, who, once he stopped laughing, nodded, and said, “actually, that’s pretty accurate”.

The bills certainly piled up quickly. When Frank and I accompanied Keira, a social care worker in her late 50s, and her senior English springer spaniel, Sadie, on their food shop, I got a glimpse of the financial cost of multispecies kinship with dogs. After a walk around Pilrig Park in Leith, a quickly gentrifying area in Edinburgh, Frank, Sadie, Keira, and I all headed to the Leith branch of Dofos Pet Centre, known to be ‘Edinburgh’s oldest pet store’. Keira, as she grabbed a bag of dog food, told me, “This is what Sadie is on. It’s for senior dogs, and it’s lighter on her stomach. So, these guys here [at Dofos] only stock what they would feed their own dogs. No artificial chemicals in it... most of them are quite natural and organic. And Sadie’s treats, they’re from the same line”. I glanced at the price before we turned to the treat section: £16 for a small 2kg bag that would last Sadie, a 15kg dog, two weeks at most. Keira seemed to have noticed my clearly not-so-subtle peek at the price tag. “Quite costly at times, but you know what, she’s my dog and we love her, so we can be bad”, she winked cheekily and smiled.

In this way, acquiring food for Sadie not only involved a financial calculus of finding something under a given budget, but also a *taste* in food and treatment of the body based on that taste that revealed “the deepest dispositions of the habitus” (Bourdieu 1984, 188). In addition to Sadie’s age and health conditions, her emphasis on the ‘natural’ and ‘organic’ rendered visible the idea that Keira had “of the body and of the effects of food on the body, that is, on its strength, health, and beauty” (Bourdieu 1984, 187). Dog food, then, was not only produced through a blend of various nonhuman materials such as meat, vegetables, and micronutrient supplements, but also classified “by a labour of identification and decoding” (Bourdieu 1984, 94) according to *taste*.

However, dog food also had ‘thing-power’ that demanded “a sensory attentiveness to the qualitative singularities” (Bennett 2010). As we made our rounds through the store, a clerk approached us —

more specifically, Frank — and asked me if he was allowed a treat. I said yes, looking at Frank who was already drooling in anticipation, his gaze fixated on the treat in the clerk's hand. I thanked him as he let Frank lick up the treat off his hand. He then turned to Sadie, but she was too busy trying to help herself to the more extravagant treats that were *asking* to be noticed: dried trachea of various animals, biltong, and sausages — all hanging out in the open, taunting any dog that entered the store with their distinctly meaty stink, forming a vibrant part of the assemblage, “ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant material of all sorts” (Bennett 2010, 23). The gravy bones that the clerk was carrying were clearly too paltry for her refined palate. Frank soon realised what was happening and decided he wanted to join Sadie in sniffing the fancier treats. He got a bit too enthusiastic as he pulled me toward the wall of treats with all his strength. “Frank, what are you doing?” I asked, tightening my grip on the lead to prevent him from getting within bite-distance from the tantalising selection of dried meats. “He’s like, ‘I’m shopping, mum!’”, Keira said in jest.

But this wasn't just a joke. Keira was right in a way; Frank really was shopping. And so was Sadie, who was clearly showing her preferences, her decision as not just a dog attached to her human, but a consumer in her own right. The dogs here were economic agents driven by their determined legs, tremendously perceptive noses, and their *taste*. And their canine taste in treats classified them as well as their humans — Keira and me — as social subjects who were classified through the distinctions “between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar” (Bourdieu 1984, xxix), and the good enough for the dog and the unacceptable for the dog. As usual, I eventually gave in to Frank's taste — as I often do — and pulled out my wallet to buy Frank a biltong, which he insisted that he carry in his mouth on the way to Keira and Sadie's flat where we headed to for a sit-down interview. Sadie ended up getting some treats made of dried fish skin, which Keira said were good for Sadie's skin and coat.

Interestingly, Keira told me that she opted for this specific fish skin treat instead of the other kind of fish treats that was hanging next to it, because she couldn't stand the *eyes*. I looked at the dried anchovies; their lifeless eyes stared back at me. “It's still got the face! The eyes!” Keira shuddered. The bag of food in her arms, the fish skin treats, the biltong in Frank's mouth all once had faces, I thought to myself, thankful that I didn't have to deal with faces of dead animals in order to feed

Frank. I did feel a little sombre thinking about all the animals that were killed to be circulated as things to be bought and sold — animals that once had their faces and eyes intact. But the anchovies with their blank eyes reminded me that (pun not intended) “[t]he ‘eye’ is a product of history reproduced by education” (Bourdieu 1984, xxvi). Keira and I were trained and educated to find only the processed and faceless things were palatable as foods, as food was not just “acting in confederation with other bodies such as digestive liquids or microorganisms but also ... coacting with the intensities often described as perception, belief, and memory” (Bennett 2010, 45). The fiscal, the affective, and the visceral were thus inseparably and seamlessly entangled in the economies of dog food.

At the same time, however, the finances, feelings, and decisions involved in maintaining kinship were also a site of tensions and concerns that organised multispecies economies (see Mullin 2007). In the cosiness of Keira’s flat, about ten-minute walk from Dofos, our conversation returned to the topic of money. “They cost a fortune, don’t they! Their insurance, pet plan, vet plan... and it’ll just go up. Her insurance started at £11 a month when she was younger, but now it’s £37. And as she’s gotten older, she’s had some treatments as well: she’s had some fatty tissue taken away from here”, Keira showed me at the area where her belly met her hind thigh. “And she’s also had some lumps and bumps”. I sighed, thinking about how I was planning to get Frank a more comprehensive health insurance on his fifth birthday, just shy of two months from the day of this interview. Was it going to cost over £30 a month? That seemed steep for my budget, but I knew I was going to be a sucker again, just as I was when I purchased the biltong Frank had picked out. On the bus ride home, I took out my phone and googled “best health insurance for dog UK”, which unsurprisingly yielded thousands upon thousands of search results. I scrolled up and down, went back and forth, comparing the countless options that appeared on the screen and reading the testimonials until I felt so carsick that I had to stop. I put my phone away and focused on getting the nausea under control while I patted Frank on the head and stared out the window.³

³ At the time of writing (January 2021), a night of heavy snowfall at the start of Storm Christoph, Frank has had his very own health insurance for about a year. I pay about £23 a month for it. And at the time of revising, on a chilly summer’s night in June 2022, Frank has had his health insurance for over two years, though the price had doubled due to his age.

The sheer scale of money spent on, or for, dogs could push some serious budgetary boundaries, way beyond £37 a month. Forest, a Spanish rescue hound, has been a pricey dog for Sandra, an illustrator and art therapist in her late 30s who primarily works with children. In fact, Sandra admitted that she would love to have another dog, and that it would be good for Forest to have company, but the cost was a, if not *the*, barrier. “Since we had him, he fractured a tooth, ran off and had an allergic reaction on his paws, and dislocated his knee, and he’s cut his paw open”, Sandra shook her head, listing the serious injuries that Forest had incurred in the past year or so. Forest, getting his velvety, floppy ears massaged by his human, was oblivious to the conversation. The list went on to his more regular expenses: “he also has supplements for his joints, which runs to about £60 a month”, “40 quid for 15kg of food that’ll last him a month”, as well as “hydrotherapy once a week” for his hip dysplasia, which used to be paid out through insurance, but was now being paid out of pocket to stop the insurance from “going through the roof”, as Sandra put it. She easily spent well over £100 on Forest every month. Forest, with his various medical needs, had a strong influence over the management of Sandra’s monetary resources, creating new nodes and shaping some of the existing ones in their multispecies economy.

The ever-growing dog industry offered quite the range of goods and services that humans could seek out for their dogs in Edinburgh, and Kirsten, a dog groomer, and her two dogs — Angela, her elderly and arthritic labradoodle who had canine dementia, and Larry, her goofy two-year old standard poodle — played active parts in this economy. Larry, even though he was young and healthy, was a costly dog: as a purebred dog with some anticipated health issues, his insurance alone started at £35 a month at the age of two. But Angela was the one who needed a truly impressive and expensive array of products and treatments for her various ailments in the past five years that made Larry’s insurance seem negligible in comparison. Kirsten recounted, “she’s on this supplement that helps her brain function. She’s also on gabapentin for arthritis, but we reduced to dosage because the vet said she’d heard there might be a link between gabapentin and dementia. So, obviously, they didn’t want to risk making it worse”. I nodded in silence and felt the air thicken with gravity.

“But she gets acupuncture so it’s all fine”, Kirsten smiled brightly, lightening the mood. “What they tend to do with Angela is each side of her spine, her shoulders, her hips. There are three sizes of

needles, so they start with the tiny ones, but now Angela's doing well with the medium ones. You can see the muscles start to work, because the needles start working their way back out, and you can see the muscles twitching". She deliberately twitched her hand muscles to imitate the muscle twitch that Angela would display during her acupuncture treatment. "She's also on another supplement for arthritis as well. She's on all kinds of supplements, like golden paste, magnetic collar, fish oil... you name it, we tried it", she chuckled. Her voice carried a strange tonal mixture of a fascination surrounding the extensiveness of supplements and treatments that she has had to purchase for Angela and a quiet acceptance of all the illnesses that Angela had to endure. Angela's medications, treatments, and illnesses thus affected not only Angela's canine body, but also Kirsten's human body. As Bennett wrote, "the power of a body to affect other bodies includes a 'corresponding and inseparable' capacity to be affected" (2010, 21).

"Angela used to get massages [for her arthritis]. That's actually how we found out she had cancer", Kirsten continued. I gasped. *Cancer? On top of arthritis and dementia?* "It was in the back leg. We thought it was a fatty lump, but during the massage, they were like 'we think it's getting bigger'. So, we got it checked and we found out it was a tumour", she said as she rummaged through the photos on her phone to show me the photos. "She got two surgeries. First to get rid of the lump, and the second at the Dick Vet's oncology unit to get as close to the margins.⁴ Then we waited for the wound to heal before we started radiotherapy. She was going under anaesthetics every single day for three weeks. And then of course, there's the big burn that takes ages to heal", she swiped her index finger on the screen of her phone to scroll through the different stages of Angela's cancer treatment. Some of these photos were quite gruesome; I could almost *feel* the raw skin and stitched wounds that left permanent scars on Angela's body. "They never give you the all-clear as such — she'd get seen every few weeks, every month, then every six months. They do all the tests. They don't even use the word 'remission' or 'cancer-free'. But that was five years ago, and she's doing fine now".

The cancer treatment was covered under Angela's insurance at the time, as it was just under the maximum amount she could claim under her plan. Unfortunately, it meant that she could no longer

⁴ Commonly referred to as 'the Dick Vet', the University of Edinburgh's Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies not only offers veterinary education, but also conducts veterinary research and clinical practice.

have Angela insured once the treatment was over. It simply became too costly due to her history of cancer: £200 a month. This meant that any future medical treatment that Angela might need would be paid out of pocket. But Kirsten had a bold and simple principle when it came to her dogs. “Never mind the money, we will find it”. Kirsten thus had “a commitment to living and dying with response-ability in unexpected company” (Haraway 2016, 38) of cancer, dementia, arthritis that ravaged, but were also parts of, Angela’s body as well as the things that formed the intertwined economies of “living, throbbing confederations that are able to function despite the persistent presence of energies that confound them from within” (Bennett 2010, 23–24).

For many dog people, then, economic decisions concerning their dogs were also informed by an *intersubjective* and *sensible* understanding of their dogs — not just *any* dog, but *their* dog — that they’ve gained through intimate, intense, and imaginative engagement as multispecies kin who were ‘yoked together’ (Haraway 2016). That is, dog people made their dog-related economic decisions with not just dogs and their needs in mind, but also their human bodies and selves, speculations, evaluations, and judgements, which have themselves been influenced and shaped by their dogs. Here, it is significant that “[i]nter-subjectivity does not mean ‘equality,’ a literally deadly game in dogland; but it does mean paying attention to the conjoined dance of face-to-face significant otherness” (Haraway 2003, 41), and, I add, *imagining* a shared subjectivity and sensibility.

When I asked Sandra about Forest’s supplements, she told me that she opted for ‘natural’ solutions to address some of his behavioural issues, such as hyperactivity or nervousness, as opposed to more formally medicalised, or what she called ‘chemical’, solutions: “my dog behaviourist friend was saying, ‘well, you could put him on medication’. And we were like, ‘no, we’re not doing it. He’s on his natural calmers’. But she was like, ‘you can take it a step further, and that would allow him to access more training’. But no. I’m dead-set against chemicals — I don’t take them myself. I wouldn’t give it to him unless he really needed it for pain or something like that. But not to manage his behaviour. I don’t agree with it in children, either. I think it’s about taking the time, practice, and making them feel safe. This is personal, but I think medication can give a false sense of safety, and if you give it to a dog and then stop it, the dog can revert back”. Then, she added, crucially, “*It’s the same with humans*”.

Sandra's staunch stance against 'chemicals' accompanied by the perspective that one must take the *time* and *practice* to create a sense of safety rather than exercise behavioural control via medications were motivated not by financial concerns, but by her intersubjective and sensible understanding of canine and human bodies in kinship. Her kinship with Forest, then, operated not only in terms of money, but in terms of time and energy spent in bodily entanglements, two major currencies in multispecies economies. However, her conviction that 'no chemicals' was the most responsible choice for her dog was informed in part by her belief surrounding what was most responsible for her dog, herself, as well as other humans: as she said, "it's the same with humans".

Sandra's comment on how a medicated dog can revert back to misbehaviours once taken off medication also indicated her genuine concern for longevity and sustainability of her kinship with Forest. She didn't want quick fixes that only addressed issues on the surface, the (mis)behaviours themselves; she was committed to responsible care practices that may be more time-consuming and effortful but crucially, made ethical sense to her and her way of managing the family and the bodies that constituted the family. These practices were centred around doing right by her dog as well as herself, for the sake of their continued kinship.

Similarly, Michelle, a horticulture student in her early 20s, told me during our walking interview in November 2019 that she had recently decided to stop using the topical tick prevention medication that Ru, her black-and-tan Pomeranian, was prescribed. "I got some of it on my hand by accident and I developed a horrible rash", said Michelle, pointing to the top of her hand where the rash had been. "I couldn't put it on Ru after it did that to me". Of course, her reaction to the medication did not necessarily mean that Ru was going to have the same reaction. But that was irrelevant. Her concern stemmed from a sense of embodied intersubjectivity in which her body, her skin, were both immediately and morally connected to her dog's body, his skin. Tsing (2015) wrote that "[w]e change through our collaborations both within and across species" (2015, 29) because "our 'selves' is already polluted by histories of encounter" (2015, 29). Here, I saw that the collaborations might extend beyond animate beings that can be distinguished through the category of 'species' to include

inanimate objects that had thing-power — like tick prevention medication — to shape the encounters and contingencies between animate beings.

I wasn't exempt from this intersubjective and sensible way of relating to Frank either, unafraid to put in the time and effort to find the very best thing for my dog, for me, and for our continued kinship. When we first moved to Edinburgh, one of the most pressing tasks on my to-do list was to find a new kind of food for Frank, as the Canadian brand of food I used to buy back in Toronto was not as reliably or affordably available in the UK. And to make things more difficult, Frank was a fussy eater who often spat out food or treats that weren't to his liking. At first, I tried to continue buying the same Canadian brand of food, but it cost much more than it did in Canada, and more importantly, it was frequently out of stock, which led to some last-minute scrambling that put me on edge.

So, we embarked on a serious food-finding adventure. I started with online research, googling terms like 'best dog food UK' and asking local online dog group members about what they feed their dogs and why. Dog foods found in grocery stores, which were cheaper, but usually considered low-end in terms of nutritional value and quality of ingredients, were never that popular in my search. The array of popular higher-end options that we were faced with, however, was impressive, yet overwhelming: raw food, dried kibbles, wet food, home-cooked, or a combination of some or all? Chicken, beef, duck, lamb, salmon, turkey, or venison? But no matter the kind or brand, the foods that made it to my shortlist were all 'high in protein', 'low carb', 'made with fresh ingredients', 'gently cooked', 'cold-pressed'. These key terms that came up in my quest were eerily similar to the kinds of food that I would be recommended if I were to be seeking out a particularly health-conscious diet myself. I wondered if this was what Tsing described as "mutualism as a form of love" (2015, 220) and "experiments in collaboration" (2015, ix) in action.

The brand that I ended up choosing — after having tried at least eight different options — used the words 'human-grade' to describe the ingredients used in their kibble. Their branding literally revolved around their ingredients' being fit for human consumption. Maybe, at least subconsciously, I was drawn to it precisely because of that; I wanted to give Frank — my dog, my *child* — the kind of food that was made with things that I would be okay and safe with eating myself. In a strange

moment of curiosity, I once decided to put it to practice, too. I popped his kibble in my mouth, one nugget of perfectly balanced canine nutrition releasing a meaty and yeasty odour in my mouth with every opening and closing of the mandible. *Surprisingly bland but also surprisingly palatable*, I thought. As I chewed the last bit of the kibble before swallowing what had become shapeless mush in my mouth, I thought about the human foods that Frank got from me almost every day: a dog of fussy — and as my friends put it jokingly, *middle-class* — taste, he accepted a piece of my breakfast scone, some Greek yogurt, crumbs of cheese, chunks of bagel but not fruits or vegetables (which he sniffed and turned his head away or spat out). Even though I couldn't say that I really enjoyed the taste of the kibble, it was a humbling and otherworldly experience for me to have a taste of some of his food in this unusual reversal. Having consumed each other's foods, we became bilaterally co-substantial, engaged with one another through the substances we consumed and shared in our bodies. Eating, as Bennett described, then, was “a series of mutual transformations in which the border between inside and outside becomes blurry” (2010, 49).

Here, our *habitus*, our embodied class, also became bound together in our shared consumption. Indeed, as Bourdieu (1984) argued, class was not solely based on finances, but rather on an amalgamation of economic, social, and cultural capital. My consumption — both purchasing and eating — choices not only for my human foods but also for Frank's, reflected the classed nature of more-than-human economies and kinship: Frank's taste and mine mingled as we entertained “the possibility of becoming not exactly the other through metamorphosis but *with the other* ... [in] receiving and creating the possibility to inscribe oneself in a relation of exchange and proximity” (Despret 2016, 17) through our foods that not only cost money and signify class through taste, but also carry meaning and feelings that affect our very bodies (see Mullin 2007).

In these ways, money was not the sole driver in the multispecies economies that dogs and their humans made, shaped, and participated in. Dog people's sense of moral responsibility to their dogs — the obligations to be fully engaged and committed to our canine companions as our kin — as well as thing-power of various abiotic materials coexisted in tension with fiscal and budgetary concerns. How to care for dogs and how to do it responsibly were at the core of the moral endeavour that dog people pursued in their kinship with their dogs. That is, in the careful management of our

kinship, the financial/capitalistic and the moral/ethical were inseparably woven together by responsibility, our shared ability to engage with, care for, and respond to one another across the liminal boundaries between different species as well as in entanglement with inanimate materials.

the economies of training

Another potent example through which the entwining of multiple more-than-human economies manifests is dog training. Financially, most of the group training classes offered in Edinburgh ranged from £45 to £75 for a bundle of classes (usually for four to six classes, about an hour each and once a week), while private, one-to-one sessions were pricier, ranging from £50 to £150 per session — not prohibitively expensive by middle-class standards, but not exactly a negligible sum, either. After all, dog training seemed to be a white middle-class activity in Edinburgh,⁵ which perhaps unsurprisingly reflected the areas in which I conducted my fieldwork.

But within the practice of training, there was an interesting economic exchange going on between dogs and their humans. In Moira's 'puppy life skills' class, the dogs were learning to 'trade' or 'exchange' certain simple movements — like moving their butt down to the ground — that would eventually become trained, regular behaviours — like 'sitting' — for payment in treats. Their humans were being told by the trainer to "break up the treats to be smaller, because otherwise, you fill the dogs up and they lose their motivation to keep training". For the 'basic' training, which included things like name recognition, sitting, lying down, settling down on their blankets, the payment was not too great: just tiny little bits of treats, usually torn up by hand. Confirming the economic nature of this multispecies exchange of goods (treats) for services (exhibiting certain movements), Moira told the humans to "be selective about when you pay them a lot".

⁵ In all the training classes, where I met and observed over 40 dogs and their humans, there wasn't a single person of colour in attendance. Most attendees were white women and men in their late 30s to late 50s who were married or partnered with kids, younger couples with no human children, and single white women in their 20s. Single men were rarely — but not never — in attendance.

This method was common yet seemed somewhat cruel and capitalistic. One of my neighbours who bred golden retrievers, and as a result often had young pups, told me that his pups learned to be very well-behaved from a young age because the trainer he worked with taught him to cut up the treats into the tiniest little pieces to “make them want more” and “so that it doesn’t fill them up so fast”. I was also told by a trainer that I worked with that I should train Frank before his meal so that he would be more desperate and eager to perform for food, so that he would “work harder for it”. Casting dog training as an act of exchange involving work/labour and payment created a performance-driven and commodified multispecies economy between dogs and their humans in her class.

Different actions and performances were to be differently ‘priced’, too. For example, in one of Moira’s livestreamed training classes in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, she informed her clients to “think ahead to vet appointments. Bring *high-value* treats that will distract the dog from the vet stuff”. She explained that this was because puppies can often be afraid of new situations that involve strangers, and it was best that puppies learn at a young age to associate vets with getting ‘high-value’ biscuits. This way, puppies got to learn over time that the vet clinic wasn’t a strange, scary place, but rather a place where they got lots of good treats for sitting down on the scale, getting on the examination table to be poked and prodded for a little while, and dealing with some discomfort or fear without acting out. This performance-driven way of managing puppies through a tiered pricing system, perhaps cynically, briefly made me wonder if this was a reflection of capitalist ethos that mobilised scarcity to create material desires, not only in humans but also in dogs, but I subscribed to this training method myself despite it all because it *worked*.

At the same time, dog training was also an ongoing, time- and energy-consuming activity that required dog people to be responsible in intersubjective and sensible ways. ‘Dog training’ often seemed like a misnomer, as the training classes revolved around teaching humans how to engage with and respond to their dogs through attuned bodily practices. Indeed, Moira taught the human attendees not just how small and scarce the treats should be, but when and in what tone to praise the dogs (e.g., ‘good boy!’ in higher pitch with overt excitement), how to dispense the treats so that sharp puppy teeth wouldn’t clamp down on their fingers, and most importantly, the *responsibility* to

understand what their puppies were trying to communicate when training was not going as planned, which happened often with young puppies.

It was here that the entwining of the financial and the responsible in multispecies economies became clear. For example, when the vizsla pup in the class started chewing on her own harness while leaping around with a tremendous level of energy, Moira posed a question to the whole class, inviting everyone to think intersubjectively and sensibly with a dog, to engage with how one could best respond to what was happening: “why do you think she is behaving like that?” When the pup’s human responded apprehensively, “she’s... bored?” Moira agreed, “she’s bored! So, give her a toy”. With the toy as the solution, the pup stopped gnawing at her harness. Moira didn’t forget to remind people about the potential financial consequences of failing to pay “attention to the here and now of encounter, in all its contingencies and surprises” (Tsing 2015, 46): “otherwise, your £50 harness will just turn into a toy”. Like this, engaging genuinely with a dog in order to be respond to them as our kin and ensuring a (financially) well-managed household in which certain rules were to be taught through training and followed as a cohesive family unit were not separate issues. Much of ‘essential’ or ‘basic’⁶ dog training was about learning to think about and act on both while not privileging one over the other.

But there was something more to it, more than the financial and the responsible tangled together; there were so many *feelings*. This perhaps shouldn’t have come as a surprise, though: being responsible through intersubjective and sensible engagement, which also often implicated money, ought to elicit some serious feelings, like Keira’s visceral reaction to the anchovies with eyes. Indeed, “don’t get frustrated” was something that Moira repeated multiple times across multiple classes, and something I also told myself whenever Frank and I participated in training activities in our own time. The feelings evoked in the training activities — frustration, joy, pride, sadness, and more — ebbed and flowed, shaping the bodily experiences that we got to share while connected through Frank’s collar and lead, pouch full of treats, and a clicker.

⁶ There are training classes that are solely focused on teaching dogs ‘tricks’ that aren’t considered quite as basic, as they are not really essential. But the focus of those classes tends to be fun/mental stimulation rather than managing the household. As such, they are often considered optional.

Here, the clicker, an inanimate, material thing, and its thing-power played an especially significant role in shaping feelings in our training. Clicker training is a method of dog training that utilises a small, handheld, analogue device — a clicker — that makes a loud ‘click’ when the button is pressed and released. It is a rather simple tool made of a small sheet of metal sandwiched between pieces of plastic that were moulded to fit the curvature of human fingers and a plastic button that, when pressed, bends the sheet of metal, and makes a ‘click’ upon release of the button. The ‘click’ works to ‘mark’ a behaviour to be rewarded, thus associating a dog’s attention to the ‘click’ with a treat, praise, or both. For example, if I asked Frank to sit, and Frank then put his butt down to the ground, I would ‘click’ to ‘mark’ this behaviour, immediately followed by the words ‘good boy’ in an excited tone and an offering of a small bit of treat. It is a tool designed intersubjectively with certain dogs’ *umwelt* in mind, as the ‘click’ is quite a distinct sound that cuts through the air, making it difficult to bury under the background noises of the everyday, including the human voice. The trainer that Frank and I worked with recommended clicker training to us because Frank is a particularly noise-sensitive dog who is easily distracted by sounds; he readily ignored my calling his name when we were out and about, as my voice dissipated among the sounds of everything around us — cars, buses, birds, the wind, other dogs, other people. The effectiveness of the clicker was immediate from the first time we used it. His ears perked up at the first click, his curiosity focused entirely on the sound that emerged above all other noises. My frustration and anxiety disappeared as getting Frank to attune to me, to respond to me, was made possible and increasingly easy with the thing-power of the clicker.

However, the clicker was more than just a device that allowed me and Frank to better practice intersubjective sensibility in our training. It was a commodity that I spent quite some time shopping for, as there are many different brands and shapes of clickers, each with different tactile feelings in the hand and slightly different sounds. Being a very tactile person, I had to find a clicker that was to my — and not just Frank’s — liking, too. I ended up purchasing one that had a big round button that felt extremely satisfying to press, which worked “to call forth, or provoke and stroke, the manual labour” (Bennett 2010, 40). It had just the right amount of resistance before the release of the button, bouncing back from the sheet of metal that bent and unbent with every ‘click’. It felt fun,

pleasant, and just right in my hands. I did pay a little more for it, though, which I thought of as a premium for my bodily pleasure, a small treat for myself priced at £12 instead of £5. And as the clicker elicited good feelings in my body every time I used it, training became more fun, too.

The clicker led us to gaze into each other's eyes as my right thumb pushes down on the button on the clicker and the left hand offers him a small piece of treat; it led to Frank's saliva and 'snoot juice' (moisture from his nose) that made crumbs of treats stick to my fingers as well as coat sleeves in the winter. These bodily actions made possible by the clicker, then, simultaneously allowed me and Frank to share bodily substances like his saliva on my hands and to "*experience* the relationship between persons and other materialities more horizontally" (Bennett 2010, 10) as it produced affective as well as behavioural effects. Commodities, like clickers, were thus both financial and affective objects that could enable repetitive but open-ended moments that constituted multispecies economies, moments crucial to our kinship (Tsing 2015, 47).

I did occasionally feel a tinge of guilt or shame of some kind for choosing to pay a premium for things — dog stuff — that were more than just functional, things that did beyond the bare minimum, even when my budget was tight. But I remembered something that Keira said to me about Sadie that brought me back to thinking yet again about intersubjectivity: "She's too spoiled... but that's why we get them, isn't it? *We spoil them like we should be spoiled*". Built on the contingent foundations of my upper-middle-class upbringing and the inherited lifestyles thereof,⁷ the multispecies economies Frank and I produced and participated in constantly developed, changed, and got remade as I took every opportunity possible to spoil not only my dog, but also myself — and by extension, our kinship.

⁷ This is not to say that love and affection toward companion animals are restricted to or exclusively found in more-than-human kinship among the middle-class. As Strange (2021) showed, pets in working-class homes in late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain were shown love and care even when economic wealth was scarce, and they certainly shared emotional bonds with their humans. That is, even though pet-keeping has always been a classed endeavour with monetary, spatial, and temporal constraints, "[p]ets contributed to the lived experience of the working-class home with their tactile, material bodies and affective behaviours" (Strange 2021, 232). Then, what sets middle-class way of more-than-human relating apart is perhaps the relative material comfort that normalised economic indulgence for the dog as well as the human in addition to the affective and sensible indulgences.

I realised that Keira’s decision not to buy the dried anchovies because “it’s still got the face!” really stuck with me when I found myself sitting with it for months, forcing myself to reckon with the processing and circulation of nonhuman animal bodies as foods. And just as I was about to let it go, I came across an Instagram post from an account that I’d been following for a while that jerked me back into the thoughts of dead fish that still had their faces. The photo featured a whole fish with its face still intact, its cold, dead eye gawking into nothing while it lay on the bed of raw meat in a beautiful and bespoke ceramic bowl. Out of focus behind the bowl, however, were two cocker spaniels, looking cute as a button in their knitted snoods that kept their billowing ears contained, patiently waiting for their human to give them the go-ahead to start digging into their beautifully prepared yet somewhat grisly meals.

Having been a long-time Instagram user for the specific purpose of following other dogs and their humans, I initially didn’t think much of it. Seeing so many things crammed in one post was a normal occurrence for the most part: the cuteness of the dogs, especially the tan and white spaniel who, even out of focus, was obviously being a very good boy, the tags that linked all the commodities — the foods, the bowl, the snoods, and even the smart watch on the human’s wrist — to their sellers, and the caption that specified that some of these commodities were actually being advertised, along with personal discount codes, through the Instagram post in exchange for a free (gifted) product. That is, the post, constructed with a photo with cute dogs and their beautifully plated foods, functioned as an information-packed advertisement that commodified the aesthetic to promote and sell more dog stuff. The post was thus saturated with information that was at the same time aesthetic, affective, and financial, revealing a digital and multispecies economy that was built on “the commodity aesthetic of cuteness [that] is warm and fuzzy” (Ngai 2012, 5; also see Maddox 2020), the feelings often associated with kinship, as well as the affective practice of feeding that involved species (goat, fish, and fruit) and things (bowl, snood) beyond the dog and the human.

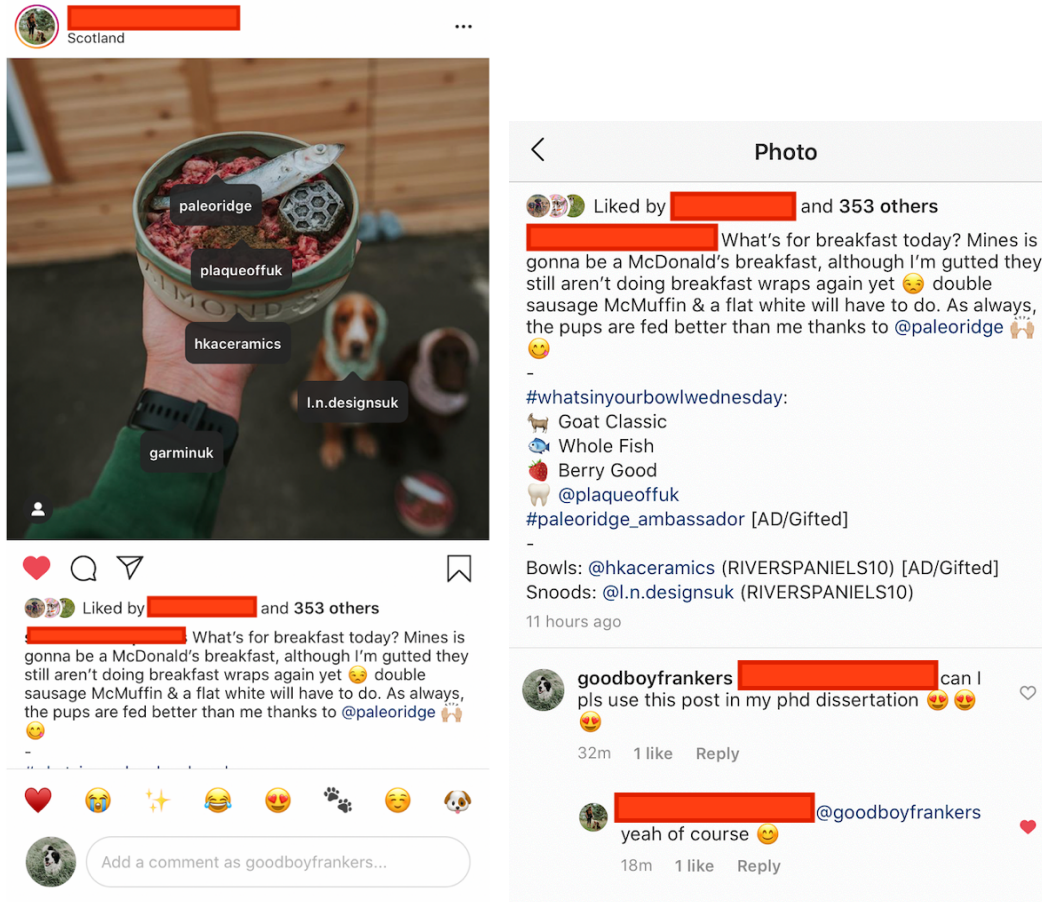


fig. 13 – Instagram post of dog food

However, Ngai (2012) argued that the aesthetic of cuteness was both about tenderness and about aggression — it simultaneously spoke “to a desire to inhabit a concrete, qualitative world of use as opposed to one of abstract exchange” (13) and “one’s sense of power over ... something less powerful” (11). Using both tenderness (dogs in snoods) and aggression (dead animals as meat) as contradictory yet coexisting parts of the aesthetic of cuteness, this Instagram post, then, revealed how “aesthetic categories based on complicated intersection of ordinary affects” (Ngai 2012, 23) could produce an economy of ambiguities and tensions that permeated the assemblage present in the post. It called forth “not only specific subjective capacities for feeling and acting but also specific ways of relating to other subjects and the larger social arrangements these ways of relating presuppose” (11), such as commodification of slaughtered animals ground up and whole, cute dogs, as well as inanimate things like bowl and snoods.

Dawn, a former English teacher from California who owns an upscale pet boutique in Bruntsfield — an affluent and buzzing neighbourhood that borders Morningside with many ‘DINKs’ (Double Income No Kids) according to Dawn — also noticed a connection between aesthetics and finances in the business of dog stuff. She told me that she followed New York Fashion Week because “whatever is going on in the world of fashion, whatever you see hitting the runways, you’re gonna see it in the dog world, too, because it’s in the zeitgeist”. Saturated with aesthetic information, the economies of dog stuff thus required noticing, which “is to incorporate others’ life performances into their own” (Tsing 2015, 248), to become-with others (Haraway 2008). Indeed, Dawn said, “People are buying the same kinds of things for their homes, themselves, and their dogs”, reminding me of all the ‘matching’ things that I shared with Frank that marked us as kin, sharing an aesthetic that was influenced by the world of fashion beyond ourselves. “So, I want to see what Dior is coming out with, what McQueen is coming out with, because we will see that in six months in the dog world”. In this way, multispecies economies that dogs and their humans were not just an emotionless calculus of balancing the right thing to do under a certain budget (which certainly did play a part, as designer products did have a price tag), but an intimate yet consumerist process through which the parties involved built webs of relationships through finances, feelings and affects, and aesthetics that converged in and through non-living material things as well as biotic bodies.

Speaking with Dawn further, I became increasingly curious about the intersection between the business side and the ethical side of dog stuff. What about the animals that were slaughtered to become food and treats for dogs? What about the people who laboured to produce the consumer goods that ended up in our homes for the dog? What about our neighbours who lived in proximity to our dogs whether they wanted to or not? In our conversation, Dawn and I zoomed out from the immediate spheres of dog-human kinship and explored some of the ways in which our economic decisions and actions involved and affected living and non-living beings outside of the household and in the world at large.

When I asked Dawn about how she chose what products to sell at her boutique, her eyes sparkled as she spoke about running an *ethical* business that was ethical to not just dogs and their humans, but also other nonhuman and human animals that were implicated in the production, distribution, and

consumption of dog stuff. It was clearly a topic she was passionate about. “It’s in the mission statement of our company, and it’s a core value of ours — when it comes to treats, especially if they’re meat treats, they have to come from happy farms. These animals must be treated well during their lifetime, and they must be processed humanely and efficiently. That’s the utmost importance, the treatment of the animal. It’s not lost on us that when we get a dried piece of kangaroo, we don’t just go like ‘oh, that’s *just* kangaroo’. We do understand that it was part of our cycle of life and that needs to be honoured. So, we do research on our farms, and we do research on our distributors to make sure that their practices are in alignment with the farmer”. These treats, then, were not just inanimate objects that were produced, bought, sold, consumed, and digested in a mechanical manner, but an *animating* object whose materiality could “horizontalize the relations between humans, biota, and abiota” (Bennett 2010, 112), like the farmers, distributor, retailer, the slaughtered kangaroo, and all the inanimate things that performed “an intricate dance with each other” (Bennett 2010, 31) around dog treats.

Environmental matters were also of concern and taken into account as crucial part of the equation that never added up to a neat whole, the *oikos* taken as the planetary habitat: “We also want to make sure where they’re coming from. Part of our mission is to really decrease our global carbon ‘paw print’ as much as possible”, she said, making air quotes with her fingers at the word play on ‘carbon footprint’. “We want our products coming to us from as close to home as possible. Our antlers are naturally collected from the Highlands. We want to be transparent about where we stand in our global economy, but also global environment. It trickles down into everything that we do”. Dawn’s narrative reflected on a segment of economic life in global histories (see Tsing 2015, 206), bringing together economic as well as ecological stakeholders — human and nonhuman, living and non-living — that were tied together by threads of affects, ethics, and finances in a world that “includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life sustaining web” (Tronto 1993, 103).

Dawn underscored her philosophy on ethical treatment of human workers who produced the goods she sold: “we make sure that we’re ordering from companies that support a fair and living wage for their employees. That goes all the way to with whom we bank. We understand that when a client

spends a pound at our shop, they're investing in every single corporation that we invest in. So, for example, the bank that we had back home, they were investing in the pipelines in Alaska, and that wasn't okay with us. So, we closed our bank account and switched to another bank, and we told our clients that", she said resolutely. "We wanted our clients to know that we're an ethical company, not just because of how we do business, but also because of the businesses that we incorporate into us. Same thing with the fruit and vegetable treats — it's the same thing. Whoever is picking that fruit, harvesting that vegetable, they need to be paid a fair and living wage, and be treated with respect". My heart swelled as I listened to Dawn's impassioned speech about her business ethics. It did the work of connecting many of the dots that formed the economies we shared with dogs, weaving a portion of the infinite, rhizomatic tapestry of interconnected human and nonhuman participants in these economies.

But ethics and financial affordability were sometimes thrust onto a difficult balance beam. Under the current regime of global capitalism, which normalises unethical exploitation for monetary profit around the globe, goods that were ethically produced (i.e., the labour required to produce the commodity was compensated justly) tended to be more expensive. "We have compostable poo bags, which costs more in a package than as single rolls. We've had clients say, 'why does this cost more?' and we say, 'the plastic'. We explain to them that yes, you're buying eight, but you're also buying eight that's wrapped in a package that needs to then be passed along and processed. And our beds, they're made from Yorkshire tweed. They're designed and made in Yorkshire. So, they're gonna be more expensive than the stuff you get from Taiwan or Indonesia or China". In this way, the global trade relations were tied with the local business in the UK, their knots manifesting in a boutique pet store in Edinburgh.

But sometimes, it was a matter of balancing two competing ethical concerns — one for the dog and one for the surroundings — with little regard for finances. I found myself having to be responsible to both Frank as his human and to my neighbours who lived in our tenement block when Frank started barking up a storm at every noise he heard, a habit that was aggravated during the lockdown due to limited opportunity for continued socialisation. I tried all the training tricks I knew, including

clicker training, but nothing worked. Around 11 a.m., which was when the Royal Mail postman usually came to my building, became an especially stressful time.

I decided to take to social media and made a post on Instagram from Frank's account to ask how other people managed unwanted and excessive indoor barking. Sylvia, a fellow border collie person, messaged me to say that Theo, her red merle collie who she described as "a supreme borker", used to have barking issues until she got a 'barking collar' that automatically made a beeping noise and/or vibrated whenever he barked to distract the dog and disrupt the barking. These collars were often considered an 'aversive' training tool (even though it caused no physical harm) and were frowned upon by many trainers who had a 'positive reinforcement only' approach to dog training, and I was hesitant about using it on Frank.

But I had to deal with the negative effect Frank's barking could have on my neighbours — the larger *oikos* we inhabited — and needed a solution that would work quickly before any official noise complaint was filed. "I took off the vibration setting so it's just the noise", Sylvia wrote. "It's as if he just needs to be told not to bark and the only thing that will tell him is the bark collar". She also reassured me that "as long as they're not barking at night and don't bark for long periods (like when dogs are left at home and bark the entire time), neighbours can be surprisingly chill".

In the end, I opted for a soft fabric muzzle that muffled his barking, at first because Frank was not a fan of the beeping collar, and because he eventually became desensitised to the collar so that it no longer served its purpose. The thing-power of the muzzle seemed better suited than that of the collar for Frank and for our context. But the fact remained the same: I resorted to something that I knew was not considered the best practice for Frank because I had to consider not just Frank's or my stake in his barking, but also my neighbours, who, in many ways, were subjected to some of the consequences of our kinship without a choice. My sense of obligation was torn between Frank and the neighbours, and I had to make an imperfect and difficult decision that met everyone somewhere near halfway in order to manage the home as well as the neighbourhood.

Multispecies economies between dogs and their humans thus reached beyond their immediate kinship through the networks of participants who enabled, supported, or restrained it, ranging from animals that became dog food to dog trainers who taught people how to teach their dogs, from vendors who sold the goods required to care for a dog to neighbours who perhaps begrudgingly tolerated other people's dogs, from material commodities that exercised their thing-power to the global trade networks that circulated these commodities. And while the long and ongoing history of domestication between dogs and humans produced and shaped these robust, intertwined, and complex economies that served to continue the maintenance and operation of multispecies households of dogs and their humans, these economies can be troublesome, full of uncomfortable and difficult tensions to balance.

But I wish to end this chapter with Haraway's (2016) call to 'stay with the trouble' — to continue juggling ethics, finances, aesthetics, and affects "in unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles" (2016, 4), to take seriously the "complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems" (2016, 58) that can be found on varying scales of the *oikos*. The trouble may be expansive, leaving daunting questions like can we even begin to think about fair economic exchanges when dogs are considered properties of humans and are controlled on a genetic level to be bred selectively to human liking? or is multispecies ethics possible in an era defined by anthropogenic influences on the planet itself? However, "[o]ur multispecies kinship has fleshly inheritance of the history of contemporary capitalism" (Haraway 2003, 24), and so do the economies that manage our kinship. Managing the *oikos* well is, then, perhaps not about finding the right answers, but about taking "a step toward a more ecological sensibility" (Bennett 2010, 10) in situated, historically specific ways simultaneously consider the economies of finance, ethics, affect, and aesthetics that shape "the very *radical* character of the (fractious) kinship between the human and the nonhuman" (Bennett 2010, 112).



fig. 14 – untitled illustrations

5 / multispecies kinship as a technology of exclusion

Whiteness *haunts* me. I have a vivid memory from my teenage years — over ten years ago — that pokes and prods at me regularly like a jagged stone buried deep in my pocket. It was the first time that I experienced being *animalised* as a racialised person. It was Labour Day, a national holiday in Canada, and I was sat in my living room with umma, watching the morning news. A politician had committed a racial faux pas, stating that ‘Asians work like dogs’ because most convenience store owners, commonly Korean immigrants to Canada (like me and umma), chose to keep their stores open on Labour Day. I remember umma’s fuming rage at the news segment. Her slightly trembling voice was raised as she balked at the audacity and arrogance of white people who *dared* compare Asians to dogs for working hard, for braving a move to a new country in search of a ‘better life’ only to be treated, literally, like an animal. I felt a pang of guilt knowing that umma had given up her successful career as an anaesthesiologist at the prime of her career so that I might have the elusive ‘better life’. But it was clear to me that whatever this ‘better life’ was, being described as ‘working like a dog’ was not it.

I still struggle to make sense of this experience, however, as I also knew just how much white people around me cherished their dogs as members of their families and how much they frowned upon the idea that dogs could be anything but beloved companion animals to humans. Indeed, ethnically identifying as Korean to my white peers was often met with the question ‘do you eat dogs?’ with a hesitant look of fear and repulsion combined with a hint of tentative curiosity that managed to make me feel alien(ated) time after time. But what I didn’t have the guts or the coherent lucidity to ask back then was: if they loved their dogs so much that the mere imagined thought of consuming them brought on such a look of loathing, how was it that they could also, so seamlessly, instrumentalise dogs to racially ignorant and hateful ends? If they loved dogs, how could calling someone a dog also be an insult? It was perhaps this teenage experience that prompted me to notice the inseparable connection between animality and race, especially from March 2020 to June 2020, due to two intersecting crises: the viral crisis of COVID-19 pandemic and the racial crisis that fuelled a series of Black Lives Matter protests.

Toward the end of March 2020, the world around me changed. I'd known, hearing from my family in Seoul for a few months by then, that 'coronavirus' was making the rounds, taking massive casualties as it started sweeping across Asia. Words like 'lockdown' and 'quarantine' hastily entered the daily lexicon. My screen time, according to my electronic devices, saw a drastic increase, hitting almost eight hours per day as the Scottish government — along with the UK government — issued a nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of what came to be called 'COVID' or 'COVID-19'. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the strict measures put in place in a hurried attempt to contain the spread of the virus in the early days of the pandemic, coupled with the fact that the outbreak of the virus was traced to Wuhan, China, not only regulated what people could and could not do, but also shaped people's thoughts on race. Anti-Asian sentiments (re-)emerged in various forms, including hate crimes and hate speech (BBC 2021).

Then, in May 2020, with the pandemic still raging rampantly across the world and taking lives seemingly indiscriminately, the murder of George Floyd, a civilian Black man, by the US police sparked the start to a chain of Black Lives Matter protests — not just in the US, but across the UK as well. The video of Floyd's murder captured Derek Chauvin, a white policeman, pinning Floyd to the ground by the neck with his knee as Floyd repeatedly muttered what became his last words: "I can't breathe". Race and violent racism came to be in the limelight of the public discourse, with the 24-hour news cycle perpetually pumping out articles, videos, and tweets about the unfolding situation. Sitting on the sunken couch in my flat in Edinburgh as I 'doomscrolled' through various social media platforms and clicked through hyperlinks to leap my way through the digital datasphere, I came across a deluge of multimodal commentaries and 'hot takes' that pulled me in multiple political directions. It is in this intersection of the COVID-19 pandemic and anti-racist movement that the chapter is situated.

Amidst and with these crises, I think through two memes that I came across on Facebook. Analysing both the memes themselves and the comment responses to them, I engage with works by scholars from multiple disciplines — including anthropology, political science, critical theory, media studies, and philosophy — in order to build on theories of whiteness from an anthrozoological perspective.

Crucial lenses through which I understand the relationship between whiteness and multispecies kinship between dogs and their humans in this chapter are the ideas that ‘race’ and ‘animal’ are co-constructed and co-constituted (Kim 2015; Suzuki 2017; Boisseron 2018; Jackson 2020); that racism is a zoological matter (Ko 2019); that whiteness is a particular kind of deliberate ignorance that is made possible and manifests through kinship that is as much about distance and exclusion as it is about proximity and inclusion (Mills 2007; Wagner 1977; Weaver 2021).

Political scientist Claire Jean Kim’s (2015) argument that ‘race’ and ‘animal’ are historical and cultural constructs — imaginaries — that attribute hierarchical meaning to bodies, thus “a means of producing and disciplining different and inferior bodies” (15) grounds my thinking. Or, in other words, as Black diasporic studies scholar Bénédicte Boisseron (2018) contended, race and animality are not merely analogous, but inextricably connected through their entangled histories that co-occurred and continue to co-develop (xx). Expanding on the idea that racism is at once about human skin colour and about nonhuman animality, and thus not only social/cultural, but also *zoological*, I also draw on the work of media scholar Aph Ko (2019) who contended that the “zoologo-racial order is the true foundation of white supremacy” (58), as “racism is maintained by the human/animal binary” (18) which makes ‘animal’ a relational label that “only makes sense in relation to the white human” (57).

However, I aim to move away from the discussion on animalisation of racialised people and the rather traumatic effects thereof, which much of race- and racism-related scholarship tend to focus on. Instead, I wish to illustrate some of the ways in which “whiteness, not just Blackness and brownness, comes to be crafted in and through relationships among humans, nonhuman animals, and place” (Weaver 2021, 7). I specifically look at the entanglements of dogs, horses, COVID-19 virus, and humans in a digital environment to detail how they shape whiteness as a complex, evolving, and relational concept that influences and is influenced by not only human racial identities, but also ideas, sentiments, and power. Accordingly, I examine some of the ways in which whiteness and white supremacy are expressed and realised in producing and upholding what Ko calls “a zoological sport” (2019, 73) of determining who is ‘human’ and who is not — whose lives matter and whose are disposable — by the arbitrary (and convenient) standards formed with sentiments and

sentimentality. In conversation with anthropologist Yuka Suzuki (2017) and critical theorist Zakiyyah Iman Jackson (2020), I then demonstrate that this arbitrariness based on sentiments (rather than ‘logics’) is a function of power that “legitimated itself by taking refuge in the presumed necessity of managing, disciplining, criminalizing, and extinguishing ‘the animal’” (Jackson 2020, 53; also see Tuan 1984), thus using ‘the animal’ “as mechanisms to cement power and privilege” (Suzuki 2017, 109).

Lastly, building on Jackson (2020), Weaver (2021), and Despret (2013), I suggest that perhaps, what might make possible the dismantling of this existing structure of whiteness is a move away from love based on sentimentality toward love based on sensibility that takes positionality and reflexivity seriously. While kinship, multispecies or not, has never just been ‘warm and fuzzy’ (see Wagner 1977 and Carsten 2013), the specificity of *how* love is practised in multispecies kinship matters. I speculate that while love based on sentimentality led to discriminatory exclusion of those who lose the “battle of spared likability” (Boisseron 2018, xiv), love based on sensibility might allow for an imaginative form of kinship based on ‘embodied empathy’ that creates “the possibilities of an embodied communication” (Despret 2013, 51).

whiteness in Edinburgh

I have, throughout my fieldwork, been accosted on a few separate occasions, both verbally and physically, by white people in Edinburgh. I have been called a ‘chink’ by a white man just outside my flat in Morningside, often referred to as ‘the posh part of town’. I have been spat at on multiple occasions, both before and during the pandemic. I have had a pint of Strongbow, a cheap brand of alcoholic cider, thrown at me by a group of drunk and snickering white men on Princes Street, a busy commercial street in the centre of Edinburgh, while white bystanders actively looked and walked away. I have been pejoratively described as ‘oriental’ countless times by strangers and acquaintances, which made me feel like a rug or a paper fan with intricate patterns — an exotic thing to be looked and marvelled at from a distance, or a thing to be used as needed, rather than a

person. Coincidentally, but interestingly, I have never experienced anything racially charged when I was accompanied by Frank.

In fact, I have had strangers come up to me and smile, looking to make conversation about Frank and/or their dog(s). I remember a tall and slender elderly white woman, a complete stranger, who walked toward me and Frank at the traffic light while making deliberate eye contact, clearly with an intention of saying something. I tensed up, as I have come to expect some sort of unpleasantries. But instead of a racial slur and assault, she smiled brightly while holding her right hand over her heart, the metaphorical seat of love. She said, “he’s looking at you with such love and trust in his eyes!” I looked down at Frank, whose amber eyes were fixed on me as he waited for me to step forward to start crossing the road. I told Frank that he was a good boy and gave him a treat, then thanked the woman for her kind words. My shoulders dropped and my jaws unclenched as the tension dissolved in my body. Frank and I headed home together with some levity in our steps.

I often found myself juxtaposing the times when white people in Edinburgh smiled at me or started a conversation with me upon seeing Frank, versus all the times when they scowled at me, harassed me, or physically moved away from me — even before the pandemic — upon seeing my face (and thus my race) when Frank was not in my company. It happened in the most mundane contexts: in front of Waitrose, on a stroll through a park, at a café or a pub, or on public transit. Edinburgh, being such a dog-friendly city as well as a predominantly white city, has often made me feel liminal, at once an insider as a dog person, and an outsider as a racially minoritised Other. Frank was the anchor that stabilised me in the turbulent white waters of Edinburgh while my racialised body was being thrown around in the waves, my hands clutching the lifeline of a leash that connected me to his canine body. Oscillating in the ebb and flow, I swam with Frank in the liminal space between my dog-person-ness that made me an insider and my racial-minority-ness that made me an outsider.

This was reminiscent of the experience that Harlan Weaver (2021) shared about adopting his pit-bull-type dog, Haley, during his graduate studies as a transmasculine person. He described that Haley’s presence shaped his world, as she helped him feel safe when his appearance was gender-liminal in a cisnormative and transphobic world, while at the same time, he shaped Haley’s world as

his identity as a white, middle-class person made Haley seem less threatening to other humans despite her appearance as a pit-bull-type dog often associated with dog fighting, violence, and aggression (2021, 101). Weaver termed this intersubjective sharing of identities *becoming in kind*, “the joint building of a sense of togetherness, a *we*, and the kind of beings we become” (2021, 102) in our multispecies kinship. In this process of becoming in kind, it is essential to remember that specificities matter: Frank and I, and Weaver and Haley, produced specific *we’s*, specific couplings that shaped one another in ways that only we can with our unique bodies, histories, and experiences. And this meant that experiences of race were shaped by our dogs in ways that are specific to our unique bodies and couplings, too — our canine and human identities intimately enmeshed, continuously producing, shaping, and defining each other in terms of human categories such as race, class, and gender.

Bella, a Filipino-Japanese veterinary student from the Pacific Northwest US and Jasper’s human/mom, had her own experiences of race formed through her kinship with Jasper. On a muddy and socially distanced walk with our dogs through the Braids in September 2020, she told me that the pervasive whiteness of Edinburgh was getting to her — badly. “It’s been more and more impossible”, she said. “You know how Scottish people say that they don’t have a race problem? I’m like, ‘actually, you do!’ Like, yes, maybe people don’t have guns here, so it’s maybe not as obvious [as in the US], but the social divide is just as hurtful ... I mean, not just as hurtful as police brutality, but it’s still really damaging to people”. She then told me that recently, she was in a grocery store where a white woman looked at her like “she’s never seen an Asian person before. You just get so tired of getting *that* look. It’s exhausting”. Her words reverberated in my ears as I nodded. I knew well the look she was talking about, the look of tokenising curiosity, suspicion, hatred, and sometimes, especially since the pandemic, disgust. I also knew what it felt like to be exhausted because of this. The embodied stress responses — heart racing, shoulders hunching, jaws clenching while my brain was steeping in the adrenaline-cortisol-norepinephrine cocktail — were all too familiar. But then, Bella added, “the thing about Scotland is that it’s so dog-friendly. It’s its redeeming quality. But I don’t know if that’s enough”.

This contrast between the friendly welcome that our dogs were met with and the (violent) racialisation that Bella and I experienced is significant to my thinking about whiteness. Indeed, affectionate love toward nonhuman animals has not only been a strongly shared sentiment among the dog people I met and spoke to during fieldwork, but also something often portrayed in popular (anglophone) internet culture as a British and white ideal.



*fig. 15 – “I’m British. We only show affection to dogs and horses”
- Eileen Atkins as Jocelyn Dashwood in What a Girl Wants (2003)*



*fig. 16 – A tweet posted on 29 February 2020 from the US, reading: “A dog has tested positive for the Coronavirus. White people about to find a cure ASAP now” (@OriginalDWoods 2020).
The tweet had 353700 ‘likes’ as of 3 May 2022.*

Films and tweets like the examples above derive their popularity and humour from broad relatability; they comment on expansive generalisations that resonate with people, making them ‘true’ in the minds of many. Poignant, though not always nuanced and never complete, these digital media — including screenshots from films, tweets, YouTube videos, memes — often function and circulate online like a “virus that triggers a massive overreaction from the immune system” (12 Rules for

What 2021) by stirring sentiments that produced and reproduced whiteness whenever people engaged with them.

It was in one of the many social media groups that I became a member of during fieldwork that I first witnessed the metaphorical immune responses that provided a glimpse into whiteness not as a static concept but a relational one in its constant engagement with specific bodies. It was a different kind of whiteness — different from what Bella, Weaver, and I experienced in person in Edinburgh and the US. Even though whiteness in this digital space still involved the entanglement of dogs and humans, the internet as the environment provided a distinctly different backdrop from any physical spaces, crafting and casting whiteness in its context-specific, digital way.

The next sections zoom out of Edinburgh to explore whiteness in digital spaces on Facebook. The nature of these spaces posed some specific constraints on what I could know about the people who participated in online conversations and discussions that unfolded, including their class identity. While people's *habitus* would inevitably have influenced the ways in which they engaged with the internet or, indeed, anything else, I wish to emphasise that sentiments surrounding racism — like hatred or disgust — are not class-specific, and to underscore the focus of this chapter: whiteness and animality.

whiteness on the internet

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic heightened the significance of the internet in everyday life, the internet has long been “receded into the background of how life appears *simply to be*” (12 Rules for What 2021, 15). Indeed, the internet has just *been* in my life since I was in elementary school in the late 1990s and early 2000s, though it has since changed shape and function in many ways, with new platforms, app(lication)s, websites emerging constantly to create new spaces that allow content and data to circulate. Arguably, there is no going back to the pre-internet era. The internet continues to diversify in its form and function, offering a multitude of products, services, and spaces that

increasingly blur the distinction between ‘real’ and virtual life, and analogously, between ‘local’ and ‘global’ (see Suzuki 2017).

However, the diversification of the internet has also encompassed the diversification of the white supremacist far-right, spanning many forums like 4chan and Reddit; social media spaces like Facebook and Twitter; private channels like Discord servers; and, of course, the dark web that requires specialised web browsers and isn’t indexed by search engines. In many of these spaces, memes play a vital — and viral — role as carriers of cultural ideas that, like genes, can self-replicate, mutate, and respond to circumstantial pressures (Graham 2002). As such, memes often reflect and refract temporally specific social, cultural, and political phenomena — such as Black Lives Matter or anti-vax movements, for instance — and spread ‘virally’ via numerous methods in digital worlds, either in the same form or in mutated forms as they pass from person to person, platform to platform. Crucially, every time they are shared, they trigger a response from the environment in which they are shared, thus revealing the social, cultural, and political atmospheres of the digital environment.

Perhaps mirroring the embeddedness of dogs in ‘real’ (non-virtual) life throughout the history of the mutual domestication of dogs and humans, dogs feature very prominently in this diverse digital environment. They are found — and thrive — in many pockets of the internet, ranging from canine Instagram accounts with millions of followers, TikTok sensations of ‘talking’ dogs that use buttons that play recorded audio of English words to communicate with their humans, a cryptocurrency called ‘dogecoin’ that uses a shiba inu as its symbol, and even a whole language born out of dog love (Boddy 2017). It was in this sprawling digital diversity that I came across a particularly uncomfortable overlap between the ‘far-right’ and ‘dog people’ on Facebook in the form of memes, revealing the ways in which, “as boundaries between local and global disappear and people mobilize increasingly creative ways of debating difference, animals have become deeply intertwined in human identity politics” (Suzuki 2017, 107).

In May 2020, as I was finally feeling accustomed to the new, almost entirely digital sociality in lockdown, I came across a meme on a UK-based public Facebook group — consisted of mostly

white British members and administered and moderated by white British people — that I have been a passive member of since moving to Edinburgh in 2018. Its broad function was to provide a space where thousands of its members could share dog-related content, including memes, viral videos, questions, photos of their own dogs, as well as resources. The meme in question, posted by a white woman, depicted five Labrador retrievers of varying coat colours — two black, one chocolate, two yellow — posing for the camera. The accompanying text read, in block capital letters, “WE ARE THE SAME ANIMAL / RACISM IS STUPID”.



fig. 17 – Labrador meme

The meme garnered very positive attention from the group overall, with hundreds of members reacting to the meme with ‘like’ and ‘love’ buttons in agreement with the meme and taking the time to write a supportive comment. The conversations in the comment section under the meme showed general agreement to the meme, uncovering a way in which race was being conceptualised as something *like* breed or canine coat colour in this predominantly white, dog-loving space. One person commented, “I think that this is a fair way to state the situation!”, getting two ‘likes’ for the comment. Perhaps naively and somewhat from a place of frustrated anger, I posted a comment about how human race and dog breeds/coat colours were not commensurable categories and ended up getting a very mixed review from the group: a fair few ‘laughed’ at my comment and a few more

others showed that they were ‘angry’, while one person ‘liked’ the comment using Facebook’s reaction buttons.

Some other members also expressed their discomfort at the literal dehumanisation of people, and especially racialised people, through the meme, but their comments were met with a twisted kind of hostility. In response to a comment that pointed out the inappropriateness of the human-dog comparison in terms of race, a white woman whose Facebook profile indicated that she lived in Scotland wrote, “I’ve liked the post, if any of you think that’s coz [*sic*] I’m a racist you can do one, no ones [*sic*] putting any guilt on me”. The person who originally posted (OP) the meme replied, “🤔we all need that! United is power. Not the bitch fight 😏”, making me pause at the flippancy of the term ‘bitch fight’ that described an unfolding conversation about race, racism, and animalisation. The members who made their discomforts known stopped engaging with the post and other comments, and as they dropped out of the conversation, the dominant sentiment in the comment section became that of guilt and placation of guilt.

A virtual conversation I had with Brooke, a white woman who has a master’s degree in animal behaviour and works as a dog behaviourist in Edinburgh, spoke to the ways in which white ignorance could easily become the norm in digital spaces. “It makes me so sad, particularly with what’s happening at the moment just based on things like skin colour. All the time that I’ve spent abroad travelling, as a white person, I was never made to feel anything but welcome. But I’ve stayed off a lot of these Facebook groups”, she told me with a hint of frustration in her voice. Then, she alluded to the ignorance that featured prominently in these spaces — the kind of ignorance that was racially offensive and violent yet propped up by guilty sentiments, pushing out dissenters while keeping in those who were willing to relate to and assuage these guilty sentiments, sometimes in overtly hostile ways. “It’s sad because they don’t see anything wrong with what they’re saying, but that’s the scary thing”. She sighed.

Certainly, many of the people who engaged with the meme seemed to have no issue with the meme’s use of “a distinctly apolitical metaphor” (Suzuki 2017, 46) — or at least a *seemingly* apolitical metaphor — of Labrador retrievers to illustrate the equally seemingly apolitical statement that

“racism is stupid”. But as Brooke said, that was the scary thing. This seemingly apolitical nature of the meme worked to “naturalize ... ideas about race, in the process removing agency and culpability from the equation, and neatly sanitizing the racial ideology” (Suzuki 2017, 46). What did the statement “racism is stupid” do, after all, if not erasing or trivialising the crisis of racism, simplifying it to the extent that it merely became a *stupid* matter rather than a complex and violent phenomenon? How was it that “we are the same animal” when people of different races — and dogs of different breeds and coat colours (see Nakano 2008 for bias against black dogs, or ‘black dog syndrome’) — were in fact not treated equally?¹ And what of the fact that unlike dog breeds and coat colours, human race has no biological basis (Norton et al. 2019)?

What made the meme seem particularly apolitical was perhaps the act of ‘zoological ventriloquism’ (Ko 2019, 69). Speaking *through* the dogs to project politically loaded notions and sentiments surrounding race, whiteness was “made possible through the body of the dog” (Weaver 2021, 29), in the process removing accountability necessary in addressing racism and bolstering the mutually reinforced relationship between ‘race’ and ‘animal’ (Jackson 2020, 12; Ko 2019, 55). That is, in this meme and the discussions that ensued, dogs ceased to be living, thinking, and feeling beings, instead becoming a proxy through which race and racism became a more palatable — and simply ‘stupid’ — concept. The dogs depicted in the meme were merely props in “the invention and reproduction of race” (Suzuki 2017, 55), weaponised to naturalise (the meaning of) race without challenging “racial judgements and values emerging from one’s own cultural worldview” (Suzuki 2017, 55–56). This analogisation of human race and colour of dogs, then, was a form of what Jackson called a ‘failed praxis of being’ (2020, 15), whereby dogs were shoved into incommensurable categories to be instrumentalised as a means to cement white ignorance. This ‘failed praxis of being’, however, not only cemented white ignorance, a cognitive phenomenon, but also operated through white *sentiments*, an affective phenomenon.

¹ Quadlin and Montgomery (2022) found that “as dogs’ names are increasingly perceived as White, people adopt them faster. Conversely, as dogs’ names are increasingly perceived as nonhuman (e.g., Fluffy), people adopt them slower. Perceptions of Black names are likewise tied to slower times to adoption, with this effect being concentrated among pit bulls, a breed that is stereotyped as dangerous and racialized as Black” (210).

The comment section to the meme soon became a supportive space for white dog people who felt that they were being unfairly victimised and made to feel guilty due to their shared agreement on the idea that dogs are a good metaphor through which to understand race and racism. This was perhaps how “whiteness, not just Blackness and brownness, comes to be crafted in and through relationships among humans, nonhuman animals, and place” (Weaver 2021, 7): the sentiments in this digital space were centred in the production and protection of ‘innocent’ whiteness that was well-meaning and stemmed from ‘good intentions’, relying on sentiments *as* politics determining good/right (comparing dog colours to human races, producing innocent feelings) from bad/wrong (criticising this comparison, producing guilty feelings) while shunning or suppressing those who threatened its innocence. Indeed, the OP who initially shared the meme wrote in the comment section that she was feeling guilty, like she made a mistake in posting this upon reading some of the criticisms. But one person came to console them immediately: “OP, you shouldn’t feel bad for your post because some people have taken exception to it. It was clearly posted with the best of intentions. All this hate is so destructive”. Categorising critics as destructively hateful people whose intention was to make the OP ‘feel bad’ or guilty — rather than as those who were responding critically to what Mills (2007) called white ignorance, “a cognitive tendency — an inclination, a doxastic disposition” (23) that encouraged systemic misperception of race and racialisation as well as the dissemination of this misperception as information — reproduced a (digital) environment in which the sentiment of white guilt proliferated and was placated.

The hierarchical structure of Facebook groups also allowed for white ignorance and sentiments to be the accepted norm. Administrators who could banish whomever they pleased for whatever reason wielded the power to not only set the rules for the group, but also shape the group’s discourse and its tone (for example, the meme I discuss in the next section of this chapter was posted by an administrator of the group). Moderators could also shut down discussions that they didn’t like or agree with by not approving a post to be shared in the group, closing the comments section, or deleting a post. This organisation of Facebook groups allowed for a very bleak phenomenon: there were dominant narratives that became accepted and celebrated, while malcontents were often made to feel unwelcome (met with ‘angry’ reacts, ridicule, trolling, etc.), which drove them to leave on their own accord, or even be forcibly expelled from the group.

Whiteness in this digital space for dog people was thus a world-making framework, “a world-structuring system of meanings within which intra-human and inter-species differences are consistently thought together” (Kim 2019, 10 in Ko 2019). It made possible a sentimental environment steeped in guilt, simultaneously infused with ignorance characterised by a dogged inclination to define its political stance in terms of ostensibly apolitical things such as Labradors. At once identarian (in that it has much to do with racial identity) and relational (in that it, as a notion, did not exist in vacuum, but in an entangled web with concepts against which it was erected), whiteness conflated knowledges and feelings, its feelings grounded in identities and relationships specific to time and space. In a digital world amidst emergent racial tensions in 2020, whiteness relied on shared sentiments surrounding race and racism to justify its racial ignorance and ‘failed praxis of being’. These white sentiments, as the next section examines, played a particularly significant and violent role in the discourses surrounding animal welfare and rights, race, and nationhood in the height of COVID-19 pandemic.

zoological racism on the internet

After the quick but impactful brush with the Labrador meme, I distanced myself from the Facebook group. The meme and the responses to it had left a bad taste in my mouth, and I was being inundated with news coverage on social media that churned out articles upon articles, video footages upon video footages every hour of every day as Black Lives Matter protests and COVID-19 pandemic raged on in the streets and in the digital sphere. But in June 2020, about a month into the ongoing sequence of Black Lives Matter protests that started with the murder of George Floyd on 25 May and about three months into the first nationwide lockdown in the UK, another meme drew me back into the same Facebook group that was haunted by the Labrador meme. However, while the Labrador meme worked to shed light on the prominence of guilt as a sentiment that produced and reproduced whiteness through the dog, this new meme illustrated how “[m]asquerading under the guise of concern for animal welfare, xenophobia and racism ... find a convenient entrée into public discourse where they might otherwise not be tolerated” (Suzuki 2017, 108). In other words, this

meme highlighted a different sentiment involved in the making and maintenance of whiteness: a convoluted and complex kind of love.

The meme in question, posted in the group by one of the administrators of the group, consisted of a photograph of a protester whose arm was in mid-swing, about to throw a brick at a horse and a caption that read “If your [*sic*] BLACK OR WHITE I don’t care[;] you should be shot for throwing bricks at K9 horses and dogs !!! K9 lives MATTER !!!”.² The last sentence in the caption being a clear derivative of ‘Black Lives Matter’, the meme ignited an explosive response from the members, garnering hundreds of reactions and comments within a few hours before it was deleted for an unknown reason. The comments as well as the meme itself, however, remain as screenshots I have taken and saved on my laptop. But even as inert images that were no longer ‘live’ on the internet, these comments revealed some of the ways in which whiteness operated, specifically in the intersection of viral and racial crises.



fig. 18 – ‘K9 lives MATTER !!!’ meme

² The photograph was actually taken at a 2009 demonstration against Israeli action in Gaza, which took place in London and not at a Black Lives Matter protest in 2020.

Two thematic narratives emerged in the comment section, each creatively constructing a manifestation of whiteness in terms of the binary of ‘animal’ and ‘human’ arbitrarily applied according to white sentiments and sentimentality. The first was a narrative of animalisation of Black Lives Matter protesters. The stream of comments featuring overt and explicit expletives — such as “Disgusting scumbags”, “rent-a-thug”, “lawless scum”, “vicious bunch of thugs”, and even “bloody cowards” — was prominent, but what caught my eye more than any other insult was a comment from a white man from Cumbria, who wrote, “It’ the real ‘animals’ fault for actually throwing stuff”.

Turning protesters into literal ‘animals’ in this short sentence, the comment dehumanised racialised people, poking and prodding at the fragility of racialised personhood that has long been entwined with nonhuman animality, especially through the popularisation of race science that still lives on in subtle and insidious ways (see Saini 2019). When a few people, including myself, noted the racist undertones (or overtones) of the comment, a white woman from Stoke-on-Trent came to the defence: “calling someone a dickhead is not racist, just as calling someone an animal isn’t either”. Equating the highly political use of ‘animal’ as a way to describe racialised people to ‘dickhead’, a run-of-the-mill and less politically charged obscenity, this defensive comment functioned similarly to the Labrador meme in its apoliticisation, or political neutralisation, of animalisation, moulding race and racism into seemingly trivial matter.

But it this is neither new nor surprising. ‘Animal’ has long been “a signifier that is always convenient and changing, and any group the dominant class deems unworthy is immediately branded with this label” (Ko 2019, 57). The over-a-decade-old anecdote that I opened the chapter with — a politician’s remark that “Asians work like dogs” — was but one of many incidents of animalisation of racialised people that constitute the series of historical events, big and small, that illustrate that “the categories of ‘race’ and ‘species’ have coevolved and are actually *mutually reinforcing* terms” (Jackson 2020, 12; original emphasis). Indeed, the politician who compared Asians to dogs more than ten years ago and the man who called Black Lives Matter protesters ‘real animals’ both legitimated their positions of power in the racial hierarchy by acting as the arbiter of who gets to be ‘human’ and who gets to be ‘animal’ along the racial divide. As Ko argued, then, “*Animality* also extends beyond literal nonhuman animal bodies and serves as a construction that ... reveals

structures of power, anchored to the human” (2019, 16) wherein the concept of human is narrowly defined according to the standards of the white human “who deem themselves ... superior ... by using their own group’s traits as the standard measurement” (Ko 2019, 57). In other words, whiteness continuously creates and re-creates ‘animal’ as an abstract and arbitrary construct against which whiteness is established as humanity.

Still, the questions I held back in my adolescence remain: if they loved animals so much, how could they also instrumentalise animals to such ignorant and hateful ends? If they loved animals, how could they call someone an animal as an insult? This digital environment, like the predominantly white environment I grew up in, was supposedly made up of people who *loved* animals — particularly, dogs — yet it was quick to resort to animalising discourse as an exercise of power that “legitimated itself by taking refuge in the presumed necessity of managing, disciplining, criminalizing, and extinguishing ‘the animal’” (Jackson 2020, 53). So, what happened when nonhuman animals were ‘loved’ through discourses of rights and welfare, without interrogating what it means to be ‘human’ and what it means to ‘love’ animals as human?

The second narrative that emerged from the comment responses to the meme was crucial in understanding and addressing these questions. Revealing not only the lexical, but ethical possibilities (and dangers) of white sentiments and sentimentalities, this narrative used the category of ‘animal’ as a justification to brutalise and dispose of, calling into question what it meant to love animals. The comments were characterized by the fanatical desire for physical violence toward the protesters who were animalised, making judgements on who should live and who should die in what Ko (2019) called ‘zoological sport’ (2019, 73). Some lamented that “it’s a shame the horse didn’t trample him”. Quite a few expressed that water cannons should have been used against the protesters, as they have been recently in Hong Kong. Others, rather ironically, called for murder by gun: “I say shoot them”; “Shoot the bastards”; “shoot them on sight, I say. No excuse”. Some even voiced their desire to take matters into their own hands: “if I see anyone harming an animal, I don’t care what happens to me. Their head will leave their body”; “Personally, I’d taken them out and shot the lot of them”.

In this way, (animalised) protesters were seen as deserving of brutality and as disposable for their failure to act *humanely* toward nonhuman animals. They were deemed acceptable to shoot and kill due to the kinds of sentiments that they held toward animals — and not just any animals, but ‘innocent’ ones, who were, as one commenter put it, “just doing their jobs”. On the other hand, the people who made the comments that called for violence — all of whom were white, British, and living in Britain — relied on their sentiment of love toward animals to justify their violent stance. Ko’s argument on the concept of animality under white supremacy resonates deeply here: “[a]nimal is a label. It’s a social construct the dominant class created to mark certain bodies as disposable without even a second thought ... [and] only makes sense in relation to the white human” (Ko 2019, 57). Whiteness here was forged against the dualistic and sentimental idea of ‘animal’ wherein the ‘animal’ may either be animalised humans who were guilty of exhibiting inhumane behaviour toward nonhuman animals, and thus should be exterminated, or be ‘innocent’ nonhuman animals for whom humans, to demonstrate their humanity, must provide humane protection (from animalised humans). The category of ‘animal’ thus became sentimentally dichotomised: animals deserving of love and care versus animals deserving of brutality and death.

However, even though the sentiments that animalised humans and nonhuman animals evoked differed in their character, it is significant that “sentimentality, perhaps the century’s most privileged rhetorical mode, acted to safeguard existing power relations, ... by masking the reorganization of domination and violence” (Jackson 2020, 56). The sentiment of innocence deserving of violently protective love toward the police animals received and the sentiment of guilt deserving of violent death toward animalised protesters both presupposed a hierarchical relationality “between those with refined sensibilities and those presumably without” (Jackson 2020, 55). That is, the sentiments of protective love and violent hatred were both founded on the premise that animals, human or nonhuman, required top-down control of those considered to be inferior and lesser. White humanity in this digital space was thus constructed through sentiments toward animals, both human and nonhuman, both ‘guilty’ and ‘innocent’, complicating and convoluting the assumption of a singular discourse of ‘animality’.

This hierarchisation of racialised humans and nonhuman animals also pitted them against one another to “battle over spared likability” (Boisseron 2018, xiv),³ which poses the uncomfortable question of “Who is more important, racially subordinated humans or nonhuman animals/nature?” (Kim 2015, 19), which benefits neither racialised people nor nonhuman animals, while shifting the focus away from the fact that the question presents a false choice, one that does not need to be made between the two at all. The question, then, is perhaps an example of what Ko (2019) called ‘white supremacy’s sorcery’ and its ability to perceive and define the world entirely from white perspectives.

The temporal dimension of the ‘who is more important’ question also matters, as it suggests that the issues affecting nonhuman animals and racialised people cannot be addressed simultaneously, when in fact the animalisation of racialised humans has a centuries-long history that created a “terrifying space of abjection that binds together racialized peoples and animalized creatures” (Kim 2019, 10 in Ko 2019). Race and animal cannot be separated or classified in the order of importance, precisely because ‘animal’ is a racial construct and ‘race’ is a zoological construct. In the shared oppression at the whim of white sentiments, then, racialised people and nonhuman animals perhaps have a unique opportunity to understand the impulse to compete against one another as a conditioned effect of white supremacy, as part of its sorcery that “affect[s] the internal psyches of other living beings” (Ko 2019, 77). As Ko emphasised, both nonhuman animals and racialised people are casualties of white supremacy (2019, 96).

Escalating the violent atmosphere further, some argued that the government ought to use more militaristic methods. One wrote, “Deadly force of rubber bullets should be used now”, conjuring up the many images of American BLM protesters who have lost their eyes or their lives due to rubber bullets’ being fired at their heads. Others commented that Boris Johnson should have used his ‘arsenal’ and complained that “this country is too fucking soft” and that it was “time Britain toughed up”, summoning imperial images of the English bulldog in nationalist propaganda (British Library 2015). Similarly, some comments urged the government to “exchange horses for tanks with great guns”, and “send in armoured cars and stun grenades”. “The army should be sent in to take them

³ This is reminiscent of the Brexiteer MP who advocated for freedom of movement for (his) pet dogs (Stone 2020).

down”, wrote a white man, “let’s see how tough these morons are when face to face with an army team”. Some were more sinister, saying that the protesters “need to be stopped by absolutely *any means possible*”, and that “anyone attacking horses or dogs ought to receive *as much pain as they cause*” (emphasis added).

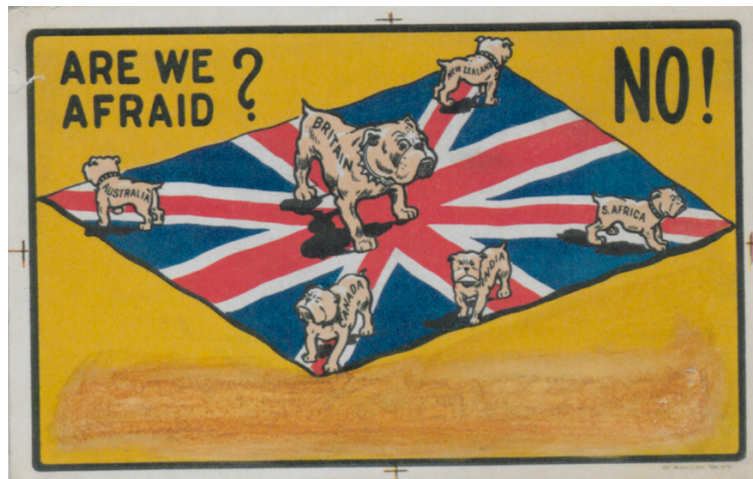


fig. 19 – ‘Are we afraid? No!’ (British Library 1915)

The callousness of these comments brought to mind what Katie Hopkins, a white British woman who worked for the Sun, expressed in 2015. She painted a vividly cruel picture as she argued that gunships should be used to stop migrants after a fishing ship carrying migrants capsized, killing almost a thousand migrants. Dripping with sentiments of disgust, Hopkins said, “Show me pictures of coffins, show me bodies floating in water, play violins and show me skinny people looking sad. I still don’t care”. Her justification was that “these migrants are like cockroaches” that can spread “like norovirus on a cruise ship” (Plunkett 2015). Characterised as vermin, migrants “aroused feelings of hatred, anger, disgust, or detachment, immediately disqualifying them in terms of moral worthiness or protection” (Suzuki 2017, 113) just as the protesters, characterised as the ‘*real animals*’, had.

These sentiments — love, disgust, protection, hatred, etc. — created discourses surrounding animality that perpetuated the hierarchical relationality that co-constructed race and species, rendering racialised people’s “humanity provisional, where the spectre of nullification looms large” (Jackson 2020, 16) while also rendering nonhuman animals vulnerable to instrumentalization and

even weaponization against racialised people. However, it was also precisely these contradictory and convoluted sentiments that destabilised ‘human’ and ‘animal’ as undetermined and unsettled categories that rely on white sentiments for their position in any given point in history. Perhaps, then, what Jackson referred to as “liberal humanism’s biopolitical logics” (2020, 77) are not *logic* at all. Instead, they are sentiments and sentimentalities that can be arbitrarily applied to (or withheld from) both humans and nonhumans to the end of making and maintaining whiteness, including the placation of white guilt. That is, a sentiment that arises unchecked from lack of critical interrogation about what it means to be human only in opposition to ‘animal’.

The centrality of sentiments as a pillar that upholds whiteness was particularly evident in a tangential narrative on COVID-19 that appeared in the same comment section. Many of the comments remarked that the protesters were using Black Lives Matter “as an excuse to get out of lockdown”, and that the protests were akin to “putting their fingers up to everyone who has kept the rules, the NHS, and all the 40,000 who have died [from COVID-19]”, especially because “what’s happening in America does not involve us” and “there have been so many other deaths due to police in USA”. Calling the protesters “selfish”, “foolhardy”, “absolute waste of space”, and even “plague carriers”, the commenters further fuelled the sentiments of disgust that easily changed shape to ill will. A white woman from Stortford wrote, “I hope they’re proud when they take the virus home and kill a loved one”. Another white woman from London complained that “two weeks ago, we were in full lockdown. I can’t hug my grandchildren or go into their house, and this rabble have undone everything we have sacrificed over the last ten weeks. They will take the virus home to their families and a shame if they get NHS treatment should they need it”. Some complained that “COVID is the threat today and you are going to kill us all for the sake of four dodgy cops”. Two white women added to the sentiment by saying “such atrocious behaviour when we all been fighting not to die from the virus”, and “I say we should be more scared of the silent killer out there. These people are helping the 2nd wave of COVID”.

The comments came from a sentimental place that disregarded anything that posed a challenge to the sentiments, such as data that showed there was no drastic uptick in new COVID-19 cases from protests thanks to mask-wearing and taking place outdoors (Hernandez et al. 2020 and Jha 2020).

The commenters who were adamant to pre-emptively blame the protesters for the second wave of the pandemic also disregarded that Black and brown people have been dying and continue to die at a disproportionately high rate from COVID-19 due to systemic racism in the healthcare system (though one white woman did write “lots of white people get killed, too, you know”). Additionally, they conveniently ignored not only that these protesters did not end up being ‘super-spreader’ events (Jha 2020), but also that Matt Hancock, the health secretary, and Dominic Cummings, a senior advisor to the prime minister, have both been caught breaching social distancing, and that thousands of Brits have ignored social distancing during the heatwave to pack the beaches around Britain (Boycott-Owen et al. 2020). White sentiments thus not only determined human/animal distinction and who should live and who should die, but also who was considered contagious in the initial height of the contemporary viral times.

The narratives that emerged from the meme and the comment responses to the meme exposed how whiteness, through sentiments, used race “in part as *a metric of animality*, as a classification system that orders human bodies according to how animal they are — and how human they are not with all of the entailments that follow” (Kim 2015, 18, original emphasis). Though this metric was highly indeterminate, it was always hierarchical and manifested in conjunction with “a white refusal to recognize the long history of structural discrimination” (Mills, 2007, 28). But if facts, data, rationality, and logics do not matter to this metric, and if ‘human’ is constructed against the unstable category of ‘animal’ that can be applied arbitrarily to humans and nonhumans, where do we go from here?

sentimentality, love, and sensibility

Even through the discomfort and fear I felt during and beyond the fieldwork, and through the gruelling processes of writing, editing, and revising this chapter, which forced me to revisit the discomfort and fear time and again, I never once doubted the sentiment of *love* that people expressed toward nonhuman animals. Even via screens, the authenticity of the sentiment carried through: the conviction in the tone of the written comments and the fury that fuelled the violent atmosphere

were genuine and I truly believed that they stemmed from their love of nonhuman animals — especially horses and dogs. However, as Jackson (2020) pointed out, “sentimentality is a relation, not a sensibility” (57). Love toward nonhuman animals as a “sentimental feeling has historically functioned as a pretext for racial hierarchy in the forms of a pedagogy in white ideality and the pathologization and criminalization of blackness” (Jackson 2020, 57–58), which were present in the narratives that unfolded in this digital space. Sentimental ways of relating to another human or an animal upheld whiteness, its cruelty toward racialized humans simultaneously contradicted and justified by its love toward nonhuman animals.

This sentimental kind of relating, or making kin, and practicing love requires interrogation, along with the fragile concept of ‘human’ that is predicated on the unstable (or deliberately ‘unstabilised’) concept of ‘animal’ that crumbles upon closer examination as it is applied capriciously based on sentimental feelings. Here, I turn to Weaver (2021) to understand what Jackson remarked sentimentality is *not*: sensibility. Explored previously in the first chapter as a framework through which to produce knowledge about dogs, sensibility, according to Weaver (2021), requires “a knower who has worked to identify their own positionings in terms of body, power, and oppression” (72). Unlike sentimentality, which takes for granted and naturalises hierarchies, sensibility, then, takes seriously reflexive embodiment as a foundation for knowledge production beyond an anthropocentric perspective. This bears heavily on undoing white ignorance as well, as “understand[ing] how certain social structures tend to promote these crucially flawed processes, how to personally extricate oneself from them . . . , and to do one’s part in undermining them in the broader cognitive sphere” (Mills 2007, 23) require a reflexive understanding of positionality.

I wish to extend Weaver’s notion of sensibility to encompass not only a way of knowing, but also a way of making kin and practising — rather than merely feeling — love. In conversation with of Despret’s (2013) idea of ‘embodied empathy’, “a concept which describes feeling/seeing/thinking bodies that undo and redo each other, reciprocally though not symmetrically, as partial perspectives that attune themselves to each other” (51), sensibility as a way of making kin and practicing love is not dominated by sentimental feelings playing on categories. Instead, it is grounded in the body and everything it contains and entails, which may include sentimental feelings, but so much more —

sensory feelings the body is able to experience, reflexive knowledge of positionality of the body, as well as, and perhaps most significantly, reactions to and engagement with other bodies.

Especially in the context of multispecies kinship with dogs, it can be quite easy and comfortable to slip into the soft, cosy warmth of the mere thought of cuddling up to a dog who one considers a member of the family. However, paying attention to the ways in which sentiments of love toward nonhuman animals and sentiments of violent hatred toward racialised humans may interact together to produce whiteness on the internet shattered this sentimental kind of kinship as ‘warm and fuzzy’. As Carsten (2013) wrote, “Differentiation, hierarchy, exclusion, and abuse are, however, also part of what kinship does or enables — in Euro-American contexts and elsewhere” (2013, 247; also see Wagner 1977). ‘Sensible kinship’, then, offers a different way for people to relate to and love other people and nonhuman animals. Aware of and addressing the ways in which exclusionary hierarchies may be naturalised through zoological racism, sensible kinship foregrounds sensory experiences and bodily doings as a way to “attend to the material histories of our categories, as they are given shape and vitality by way of, and inside of, organismic bodies, even if (or especially if) ultimately our aim is to be rid of received categories because of their world-wrecking capacities and death-dealing effects” (Jackson 2020, 121). Sensible kinship offers “possible conditions and terms of mutual adaptability, communicability, and reciprocal responsibility across lines of radically discontinuous speciated embodiments and sensoria” (Jackson 2020, 129), bridging the discontinuities that exist across our entangled *umwelten* with vital imaginations of more-than-human embodiments in a reciprocal but not equal way.

Jasper and Frank

Jasper and Frank are best friends with one another. Bella, Jasper's human, and I call them 'the boys'. Both former strays and suspected to be at least partially border collies, they are perfectly matched in size, energy level, and temperament. When they get together, they are inseparable. From running around the field chasing small rodents and birds to posing for a photo (with their matching bandanas), they really are joined at the hip — sometimes literally, walking side by side.



fig. 20 – Jasper and Frank

But their friendship extends beyond fun. While Frank is surprisingly dirt- and debris-repellent, Jasper is unfortunately the opposite. His rougher outer coat attracts all kinds of stuff: seeds with various hooks and spikes designed to latch on to fur, patches of mud that mats his fur, and little twigs that lodge themselves into his inner, softer coat. This means that once their outdoor play time is over, Jasper has to sit through a painstaking process during which Bella removes everything caught

in his extremely bushy butt and tail, a process that he doesn't really enjoy. But Frank is there for him as moral support, holding his hand (paw) throughout the ordeal to reassure him that it's all going to be fine.



fig. 21 – Jasper and Frank, holding hands

But of course, their friendship is still mostly about fun. Once Jasper is free from all the debris, the wrestling — their favourite indoor activity — begins.



fig. 22 – the wrestle

To an untrained eye, it might look like they are having a violent row, baring their teeth and clawing at one another with force. To an untrained ear, their grumbles and growls might sound ominous and terrifying. But their swishing tails are a dead giveaway, and Bella and I know that they have clear and strict boundaries in place that they adhere to: if one of them doesn't want to play, they both don't play. If one of them wants to take a break, they both take a break. When it becomes not fun for one of them, it becomes not fun for both of them. They know this is the way to ensure that their friendship remain a happy, loving, and respectful one.



fig. 23 – a little break

Their energy level is so well matched that their need for a break coincides — usually every 15 to 20 minutes of wrestling warrants a break, either to go slurp some water or to just sit down and pant for a bit to cool down. But nothing calls for a break quite like pizza delivery.



fig. 24 – demanding pizza

Their whole body becomes attuned to one thing and one thing only — pizza. Their eyes fixate on it; their ears twitch at the sound of the chewing. With the same kind of intensity that they share in wrestling, they now pressure us for some pizza crust. They drool uncontrollably and tap their feet impatiently. “Jasper. Baby. Sit down. Stay there. You’ll get pizza at the end”, Bella says sternly, but Jasper has just the trick. His ‘ultimate superpower’, according to Bella. He does it so often that it even has a name: the chin. Combined with the powerful puppy-dog-eye stare, it is impossible to ignore.



fig. 25 – the chin

Frank picked up this trick quickly and directly from Jasper, but Jasper is much more tenacious than Frank. After not getting anything within the first five minutes of ‘the chin’, Frank gives up and goes off to sit on his own, some distance away from the pizza. But Jasper perseveres. ‘Frank, this usually works’, Jasper glances at Frank, who looks back at him with doubt. ‘Jasper, it’s lost cause. They’re not paying out’. But in the end, Frank obliges. He comes back to join Jasper in ‘the chin’, and they both get their long-awaited pizza crust.

In pandemic times, Frank and Jasper haven’t been able to hang out indoors due to the rules of the lockdown. But when we go past their flat, which is just down the street from us, Frank makes sure to leave Jasper a message at their doorway by lifting his back leg and leaving a little scent trail like a canine text message. I think it says something like ‘I wish we could wrestle and eat pizza’. I cross my fingers and wish for the same — for the boys.



fig. 26 – Nora and Zelda. Zelda is the most affectionate and trusting dog I've ever met. She insisted on giving me a downpour of kisses within the first ten minutes of our meeting.



fig. 27 – Gina and Peanut. Peanut is the most stubborn dog I've ever met. He has 'selective hearing': he will only respond if he wants to. Gina even had him tested for deafness. Turned out, he can hear just fine.

6 / more-than-human kinship against proximal loneliness

I was never one to have too many close human friends, but I was fortunate to have a childhood that always had dogs and puppies crawling about. This was largely thanks to halmoni (my maternal grandmother) who always had at least three dogs at any given time. I remember that at one point, the dogs all had a litter of puppies at the same time, increasing the canine population in her care to something like fifteen. These dogs were first and foremost working dogs, guarding the grounds and chasing pests away from the garden that blossomed with fragrant fruits and flowers every summer in the outskirts of Seoul. However, JJ, my favourite out of all of them, was spoiled rotten as halmoni humoured my love for this clever corgi-mix.

But things changed rather suddenly with migration. My ties to these dogs were severed by over 10,000 km between Seoul and Toronto. And tragedies compounded soon after the transatlantic move: in less than a year post-migration, halmoni passed away from cancer that she has kept hidden from the whole family. She was the linchpin holding the family together. With her gone, the family scattered. And with no one willing or able to take care of them, all the dogs were given away to acquaintances or relinquished to a rescue. I was told that JJ ran away before she could be sent away. And just like that, all the dogs that shaped my childhood disappeared.

But in what initially felt like a sad, dog-less life in Canada, I learned to befriend other people's dogs: in middle school, my best friend had a golden retriever puppy who was a rambunctious ball of energy. My next-door neighbour had an old Shetland sheepdog who loved to follow me around despite her owner's desperate call to return. Even when I moved out from home to Montréal as a teenager for my undergraduate education, I continued the tradition of befriendng other people's dogs with my first landlord's very senior Italian greyhound who never stopped shivering despite wearing a sweater at all times, as well as a neighbour's gentle husky who I got to take on walks sometimes. And in 2017, when I returned to Canada after a year in London, I finally saw an opportunity to bring home my own dog — and I made sure to take it.

As a stray dog from Sochi, Russia, Frank was rescued by the shelter workers there as a small puppy at around two- to three-months-old. He was found with his mom, who shares the same cheeky facial expression that Frank often displays when he is up to something that I have yet to become aware of (usually, it means he may have hidden his chews between the sofa cushions). I adopted Frank when he was two years old through an American charity that works with the shelter in Russia. He was flown from Sochi to Morristown, New Jersey as international cargo, staying overnight at a volunteer's home to recover from the long flight. The next morning, he was transported on a small private plane by a volunteer pilot to Niagara, New York, where I picked him up by car. Finally, he was driven to Toronto, where I was living at the time. He crossed multiple international borders to find his 'home', just as my family and I once did.

As a former stray and a rescue who spent the early years of his life in a shelter, he was not accustomed to living in a home, not to mention an apartment building. Our relationship was clunky at first. He marched to the rhythm of his own beat and I couldn't keep up; I often misread his tempo instructions and we both got frustrated. But connected firmly with the leash, the lure of dried liver treats, and the affectively charged space and time we shared, we learned to create and stick to a polyphonic yet harmonious routine with one another as the basis of what became our kinship.

A little over a year post-adoption, Frank and I relocated to Edinburgh, UK for me to embark on a PhD programme. I anticipated a wave of loneliness to sweep over me: I was not going to have any flatmates, and I knew no one in Edinburgh prior to the move. I had no idea how Scottish culture was going to interact with my already-complicated Korean-Canadian cultural identity. But I found consolation and courage in the fact that I didn't have to go at it alone this time; I had Frank with me.

In the exceptionally dog-friendly climate of Edinburgh, Frank flourished. As I was able to take him to different stores, cafés, pubs, and restaurants in the city, Frank and I started sharing a wider scope of spaces and in a wider variety of ways. And I, in being (and becoming) with Frank, managed to survive the kinds of loneliness that I initially worried so much about. He kept me company, helped me make friends with other dog people (see Serpell 2000), and, being a border collie (or at least a

dog that looks like a border collie — I do not know his exact genealogy), fit right into the Scottish aesthetic and culture. He became such a significant part of my life in Edinburgh that he became the inspiration behind my research project. Once my ethnographic fieldwork began, he also accompanied me to interviews, walks, hikes, and pet supply shops as my research associate. He became a prolific director and producer of anthrozoological data in his own right.

Then, about six months into my fieldwork, a novel virus, COVID-19, which neither of us could have possibly foreseen, entered our field site, changing not only my fieldwork plans but also the very structures and affects (Haraway 2012, 305) of our everyday life. It added a new, unexpected melody to our routinised harmony, throwing us off of the groove of our well-practised daily rehearsal.

This chapter is comprised of autoethnographic reflections on the effects of COVID-19 pandemic and on my perception of loneliness in lockdown with Frank. First, I explore different typologies of loneliness — emotional/personal, social, and cultural — that have been theorised before by Robert Weiss (1973) and Sawir and colleagues (2008) and situate them in my family's experiences of loneliness. I then share three short 'quarantine stories' from my fieldnotes to highlight affective moments of what I call 'proximal' loneliness — a type of loneliness that stems from the lack of physical closeness and contact to a specific reference, one that makes us think differently about other forms of loneliness as well as loneliness in a time untouched by COVID-19. I trace the affective and bodily consequences of my cross-species kinship with Frank in these viral times through the emergent multispecies practices that we have developed in the pandemic.

In sharing these specific, situated stories of our kinship, I hope to engage with and expand on our understanding and practice of kinship and response-ability — 'praxis of care and response' (Haraway 2012, 302) — that extends beyond and across the species boundaries. Furthermore, I wish to make explicit that the consideration of nonhuman beings who cohabit the world with humans concerns a feminist analysis of loneliness. Thinking about loneliness through a feminist lens is to do so with deliberate reflection on ethics, questioning and altering hierarchical practices and conceptualisations in the world around us. In line with this endeavour, I explore some ethical and affective implications

and consequences of loneliness for dogs, who are entangled in manifold and multiform aspects and spheres of life with humans, in and beyond the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic.

loneliness and kinship before COVID-19

As a misfit daughter of first-generation South Korean migrants to Canada, I've had a complicated and lasting relationship with loneliness long before the pandemic era. By migrating, "one ceases to belong to the world one left behind, and does not yet belong to the world in which one has nearly arrived" (Grinberg and Grinberg 1989, 23), stuck in an in-between where uncertainties abound. This migration-induced liminality infected everyone in the family with loneliness: umma (my mom) gave up her rewarding job as an anaesthesiologist and suddenly became a stay-at-home mom who was tasked with raising two young children in Toronto, where she knew no one. Appa (my dad), staying behind in Seoul as the family's only source of income, found himself living alone in an empty house that once sheltered the whole family. My little sister and I, eight- and eleven-year-olds at the time of our migration, were confused and frightened, yanked from our existing friendships and other support networks, however childish and immature they may have been, in Korea.

Robert Weiss (1973) theorised that there are two types of loneliness that arise from different kinds of absence or deficit: the first kind was *emotional*, or *personal*, loneliness, an affective response to the lack of intimate attachments to dearly loved ones such as a romantic partner, or a very close friendship. It was important that these intimate attachments are tied to specific people rather than the kind of relationship. For example, recently bereaved widows and widowers would suffer from emotional loneliness even if they still had other family and friends (Weiss 1973).

The second kind was *social* loneliness, which originated from the lack of social networks, which "provide a base for social activities, for outings and parties and get-togethers with people with whom one has much in common" (1973, 150). For example, in a study of couples who newly moved to Boston, wives reported experiencing loneliness even though they were in a loving relationship with their husbands. While the husbands could help with their personal loneliness, they were not able to

address their wives' need to be a part of a social group where they could form meaningful friendships (Weiss 1973). As both types of loneliness were conceptualised as a deficit of necessary interpersonal relationships, Weiss contended that the provision of those necessary social relationships could reduce or eliminate loneliness.

Sawir and colleagues (2008) added *cultural* loneliness to this discussion, defining it as a type of loneliness that is “triggered by the absence of the preferred cultural and/or linguistic environment” (171). Their research on the experiences of loneliness among international students in Australia showed that cultural differences and culture shock that stemmed from these differences, obstacles to building new social networks such as language barriers, and difficulties in handling problems that arose due to unforeseen circumstances or infrastructural or bureaucratic issues in a new cultural environment all led to experiences of cultural loneliness (2008, 161). Cultural loneliness was painful and frustrating, leading to other unwelcome feelings such as disappointment, regret, and homesickness.¹

Without much personal, social, or cultural support network for at least the first few years in Canada, my family and I experienced all three kinds of loneliness in our lives, although to widely varying degrees. My parents' personal loneliness came from the fact that they were no longer able to live together, while my sister and I suddenly had only one parent to live with. Umma, my sister, and I also all suffered from profound social loneliness from not knowing anyone in the new country and traumatising cultural loneliness from systemic, institutional, and language barriers (although to different extents).

As our loneliness affected us in different ways, we coped with it in different ways, too. My parents adopted the ‘positive solitude’ (Sawir et al. 2008, 166) mode of coping, keeping to themselves and (barely) learning to manage the loneliness often on their own. In hindsight, it was clear that they were too overwhelmed to care about, not to mention address, their loneliness: appa, he buried

¹ Racialisation and racism play a role here, too: as Sara Ahmed (2010) argued, racialised migrants are compelled to “learn to be affected in the *right* way by the *right* things” (129; emphasis added) in order to pursue a colonial vision of happiness — that is, whiteness — thrust upon them.

himself in work — so much work. On top of running his clinic where he worked six days a week for as many hours as necessary, he regularly attended medical seminars and conferences in the evenings.

Umma, who unquestionably had the biggest pile of new responsibilities, found herself having to navigate the Canadian bureaucracies, cope with racism, tend to all the chores around the house, raise two kids, and learn English at the same time. The seven years she spent in Canada, she never had enough hours in a day or enough energy in her body; migration was a trauma. To this day, almost seventeen years post-migration, she describes the experience of migration as ‘hellish, miserable, and scary’. She shudders at the countless exasperating and fearful memories speckled with fair doses of racism. She readily admits that it was a deeply isolating experience that put her off ever migrating to another country again.

My sister, faring the best out of the four of us, quickly turned to new friendships, easing her loneliness through integration. This was anticipated given her young age and the assumed malleability that came with it, as well as her extroverted disposition. As her English improved rapidly, she made friends with many of her classmates. She seemed to have adjusted to our new lives in Canada seamlessly, until she decided to move back to Seoul to attend a prestigious international high school where she continued to rely on friends to ease her loneliness.

In these ways, multiple and often overlapping kinds of loneliness permeated our lives for years, working with countless other emotions to shape us as people and as a family over time. Appa became someone who is always working or thinking about work, umma became someone very invested in challenging whiteness, my sister became someone who I sadly didn’t get much opportunity to create new memories with outside of our childhood. And I, evidently, became a crazy dog lady.

We’re all conscious of our loneliness, too. Recently, I told umma that I loved hearing Frank’s footsteps coming toward me, what we call the ‘*pap, pap, pap*’, that it was possibly my favourite sound. She responded, “you must be really lonely” — not in a mocking or condescending way, but in a genuinely sad, sorry way. She wasn’t talking about a moment or a phase of loneliness. Rather, she was describing me as a lonely person, a person who can be characterised by her loneliness that

accumulated throughout life post-migration, throughout my pursuit of higher education away from home and in three different countries, while not having lived in the same continent as the rest of my family for a decade. What once felt so acutely painful and uncomfortable has become the norm over time, and loneliness became a fact of life, as if time smoothed the jagged edges that used to cut into us in visceral moments of personal, social, and cultural loneliness.

But with COVID-19 and the new world it brought about, the shapes of loneliness became even more varied and amplified by the loneliness of others around us, compounding with existing kinds of loneliness as well as other affects. And this time, as the following stories show, Frank was implicated, playing an unprecedented role as my canine companion in the experience of loneliness in the pandemic.

quarantine stories

a lonely apocalypse

On what seemed like a regular day in March 2020, the UK government finally caved to the pressure and ordered a nationwide lockdown as they probably should have some time before. Everything except essential services was to be closed. People were told to stay home, and to go outside only for necessities, and as infrequently as possible, while keeping a distance of at least two metres. At 8 p.m. the same day, I found myself at the neighbourhood park, taking Frank on his evening walk. It was strange to be outside on such a beautiful evening — skies clear enough see the Orion and the Dipper — with no other dogs and their humans in sight. Yasmin, the red golden retriever who still felt unsure about whether she liked Frank or not. Trudy, the long-haired chihuahua who definitely never liked Frank and made sure to let him know. Marjorie, the young escape artist lurcher who had known Frank since her puppyhood. Where were they all?

Frank quickly decided that there was no real purpose to being at the park when there aren't other dogs: once he finished doing his business with the tender caress of the not-so-chilly-anymore spring

breezes, he walked straight back to me instead of venturing into the bushes that he once loved exploring so much. We headed home as a depressed quadruped and a disappointed biped walking in perfectly coordinated pace. Exiting the park, we ended up having to go down the road instead of the sidewalk in order to keep the compulsory two-metre distance from other pedestrians, who either avoided eye contact altogether or shared a quick and apologetic glance. Frank broke our lockstep, as didn't understand why we were walking on the road and tried to pull me toward the sidewalk, and I had to persuade him with a treat to walk next to me. He didn't understand why we couldn't walk close enough to other people for him to catch a quick whiff, or why no one asked me if they could pet him.

I realised that neither Frank nor I had ever experienced this specific spatial arrangement before — walking down the middle of the road without a single car in sight — and my mind took me to a fictional zombie-apocalyptic place: the scene from the poster of *I Am Legend*, where Will Smith walks down the street with his loyal companion, Samantha the German shepherd. In this moment, Frank and I were Samantha and Will Smith, alone together in this viral world that pried me — and by extension, Frank — away from other humans.

so close, yet so far

Jasper and Bella — Frank's best friend and his human, respectively — live just down the street from us. We used to spend time together regularly: we would go for a long dog walk, come back to Bella's flat, order pizza, and hang out. Bella and I have a lot in common: we are both Asian dog-owning women from North America, in Edinburgh for our postgraduate education. Because of these commonalities we share in our identities and experiences, we became fast friends.

The dogs also have a lot in common. Both with collie blood coursing through their veins, they are unbelievably well-matched in their high energy levels. They would play for hours, wrestling and play-biting with unending enthusiasm that could only be interrupted by necessary water breaks (or

‘necessary’ pizza crust breaks). They are also not very ‘promiscuous’ dogs, only making friends with a select few dogs who met their demanding standards.

About a month into the lockdown, Frank and I ran into Jasper and Bella at Blackford Hill, one of our favourite dog-walking spots in our neighbourhood. As I was taking in the coconutty smell of the bumblebee-yellow gorse that covered the expansive landscape unfolding before me, I spotted Bella, standing next to her car at the top of the hill. I waved, and she saw us right away, waving back with a bright smile on her face. Jasper got a more enthusiastic hello than a wave: upon realising that it was Jasper and not just an unknown dog, Frank, who is usually not fussed about other dogs, galloped over to him with astonishing speed and delight. His soft triangular ears flopped in the wind as all four of his paws worked in coordination to levitate his body off the ground. Bella and I watched the dogs’ reunion with a parental kind of joy as they sniffed each other to verify each other’s identity and ran off together in the field to sniff tufts of overgrown grass, undoubtedly covered with scents of other animals.

Bella and I walked in the same direction, but metres apart. We had to speak louder than usual to make sure our voices could carry through the distance between us. As we strolled around the field, the dogs were busy unsuccessfully hunting a vole or a mouse with their snouts in olfactory hyperdrive under the long, knotted grass. A month must be a very long time in dog time, and they were determined to make up for lost time.

As we parted ways, Bella said “it’s so sad that I can’t even hug you guys”. At that moment, I realised that just as it has been a whole month since Frank got to hang out with his friend, it has been a month since I got to hang out with my friends — since I last went to a café with them, since I last grabbed a drink with them, since I did anything with them except video-calling them from my home. Even though I have always been an introvert and even though I keep in touch with my loved ones online, I find myself longing for the things I used to take for granted: sharing food with my friends, cheers-ing our drinks at a pub, and giving them a warm hug goodbye.

dinner on a screen

With eight (sometimes nine) hours between us, umma and I often time-travel through FaceTime, Apple's proprietary video/audio calling app. We usually chatted on early afternoons Edinburgh-time, and early-to-late evenings Seoul-time. When I called her on a Friday noon Edinburgh-time, I caught her, appa, and my sister all having dinner together. As the country managed to flatten the curve of the spread of the virus, the South Korean government never issued a full, strict lockdown like the UK, and instead, opted for a 'soft' lockdown. Everything stayed open and operational, provided that everyone practised necessary precautions, such as social distancing and mask-wearing. Because of this, my family has been having a very different pandemic experience from mine in Edinburgh, where everything except essential services has been shut down for over two months at the time of the FaceTime call.

Over the dinner table that was covered to the last inch with delectable dishes, my family started chatting. Appa had just gotten back from work, happy that the trains were back up and running on a regular schedule again, which meant that he no longer had to drive to and from work. Umma, worried that I still hadn't been able to secure any masks, grabbed pen and paper and asked me what I wanted in the next care package along with the masks that appa was able to get from the hospital he works at. My sister made sure to give me a tour of the all food on the table in detail: pressure-cooked rice, appa's braised lotus root, umma's fishcake stew, two kinds of kimchi (the radish kind and the cabbage kind), and the *pièce de résistance*, a beautifully presented lemon cake for dessert. Momentarily and virtually transported to the dining table through the screen, I have never been more grateful for the advancement of video-calling technology since the lockdown came in effect.

But even though I could spend *time* with my family through technological mediation, I couldn't participate in this meaningful *space*. This feeling was echoed in Frank, who was not excited at all about the dinner table full of food on the screen of my phone. No 'crazy eyes' that he gets when he gets really excited (dilated pupils, wide-open eyes), no cheeky sniffing of the air around the food as he does when I'm having my food in the same room as him. Frank and I just weren't there, and unfortunately, being there was the only way to really experience 'family dinner' as I have once

known. A small but sharp pang in my chest reminded me of the five thousand miles between Edinburgh and Seoul. Imagining the mouth-watering smell of my family's dinner, I felt a sudden urge to browse through the catalogue of Korean dramas on Netflix — something that umma and I used to do when she made the twenty-hour journey to visit me and Frank in Edinburgh.

proximal loneliness and emergent practices in the COVID-19 era

The three stories I shared above exhibit a kind of loneliness that doesn't quite fit into the categories of personal/emotional, social, or cultural loneliness. Loneliness in a pandemic is a distinctive kind of loneliness, one I would like to call *proximal* loneliness. Rooted in the Latin word 'proximus', the superlative form of 'prope', 'proximal' has multiple meanings. Not to be confused with 'proximate', which means nearby or adjacent, 'proximal' means 'closer to the point of attachment' in anatomy and 'closer to the speaker' in linguistics. It refers to the nearness to a specific something or someone. Proximal loneliness, then, stems not from the lack of relationships and networks, but rather from the physical limitations placed on the ways in which one can interact and communicate with one's existing and cherished network. It is a kind of loneliness prompted by the lack of physical proximity and by extension, the lack of the kinds of affective and sensory experiences only possible in proximity. That is, it is not that our loved ones have disappeared from our lives, but rather, that they are at least a few metres away from us — and usually much farther away, appearing only on our screens.

In this way, proximal loneliness is the consequence of the lack of corporeal interactions, the result of COVID-19 severing the affective-bodily circuits that used to connect human bodies to one another with the threat of viral contagion. Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote that "the act of relating is nothing if divorced from the spectacle of the world in which relations are found" (1945, 135), and the COVID-19 pandemic is clearly no exception. With strict physical limitations on how humans must behave vis-à-vis one another in the public sphere, our human bodies — a "complex of differentiated and simultaneous relationships between distinct aspects of individual bodies" (Lyon and Barbalet

1994, 56) — become less materially and corporeally implicated in one another, as we could no longer share spaces in which worldly spectacles take place.

The affective consequences of proximal loneliness are varied, especially as it pierces through and threads the fabric of everyday life that is already woven with other types of loneliness as well as other complex yet mundane affects — frustration, sadness, anger, contentment, joy. These affects exist in volatile tension with one another, not only affecting ourselves but also affecting and being affected by others with whom we interact and engage. The virus and its dangers, then, produce and permeate proximal loneliness as a powerful and pervasive affect in the socially distant and quarantined life.

It is worth noting that the experience of proximal loneliness often occurred during rather ordinary activities even in these extraordinary times, even if it was because ordinary things were the only things we are permitted to do with our bodies in life under lockdown. This ordinary and embodied nature of proximal loneliness was perhaps what made it susceptible to sometimes synergistic and sometimes comorbid interactions with other everyday affects, adding to the existing affective complexity of life in the pandemic.

As exemplified in the first story, something as mundane as walking the dog could elicit proximal loneliness. I speculate that this is because while walking can actualise the possibilities in an environment through our bodies (de Certeau 1984, 254), it can also make us aware of the interdictions in the given environment, such as the two-metre social distancing rule. Walking through the pandemic-struck streets reminded us with every step that we must distance ourselves from others, lest our closeness makes us fatally sick or curse us with the ability to make others fatally sick. In some ways, then, proximal loneliness can also coexist with feelings of safety and comfort in being distant, relief in the lack of proximity to potential carriers of the virus. Not only that, but as anti-Asian sentiments cropped up due to COVID-19, staying away from others became not just an issue of potential contagion but of potential racially motivated violence. Proximal loneliness is hence highly political, and its political nature must be understood as entangled with its embodiedness.

The second story similarly illustrated that routine circumstances could call forth intense affects, but added another dimension to proximal loneliness: the ‘so close, yet so far’-ness, like Tantalus’ eternal punishment in the Underworld where he was made to stand in deep water that escaped him when he tried to drink, and beneath a branch of fruit tree that evaded his grasp when he tried to eat. It wasn’t just that he was thirsty and starving. It was that there was no escape from the cruelty of having good things right in front of his eyes, but not being able to enjoy them — just like the cruelty of having friends but not being able to hug them. This torturous and tantalising element of proximal loneliness further complicated loneliness as an affect. One of the many insights from thinking about the pandemic-induced proximal loneliness may be that loneliness is far from just a simple feeling of sadness or pain derived from isolation. Rather, it is a variegated composite of multiple affects, including different subcategories of loneliness, interacting together through our bodies.

The last story combined an ordinary occurrence of a family dinner and its tantalising cruelty and filtered it through a technological mediator to produce a sensory deficit, another trait of proximal loneliness. This aspect of proximal loneliness is, simply put, the feeling of “it’s not the same”. Even though we were able to see one another, talk, and laugh, I felt that I was missing the essence of the family dinner: being there to help umma prepare the food and set the table, being able to smell and taste the food, experiencing the actual molecules in the food instead of the pixels of the video facsimile — the sensory, corporeal experiences that demand physical presence in order to experience wholly.

Technologically mediated communication, then, paradoxically brought about proximal loneliness by providing only a partial sensory and bodily experience without the senses that one can only experience in proximity, such as smell, taste, and touch. It reminded me just how far apart we were, and just how far apart we had to stay for the foreseeable future. While this technologically evoked proximal loneliness was not exclusive to the pandemic, it was exacerbated by the pandemic and the uncertainties about the future that came with it. *When will I be able to see them next? Will umma be able to come see me again next year? The year after?* The virus and the UK’s abysmal, irresponsible, and incompetent response to the pandemic made it much more difficult to answer these once-simple questions, which added a sense of temporal precarity.

Proximal loneliness, then, is an exceptionally complicated — visceral, embodied, political, contradictory — kind of loneliness that is nebulous and ever-changing in its form depending on the physical circumstances in which it is situated. Sometimes, it manifests as pain in the heart, hollowness in the chest, welling of tears in the eyes. Sometimes, it manifests as a blend of emotions uncontrollably boiling over in a meltdown. And other times, it even manifests as comforting solitude away from the contagious world outside. But at the same time, it has become (and is still becoming) a chronic, dull kind of loneliness as the lockdown and the need to adhere to social distancing measures continued. The longer we go without saying hello to strangers we encounter on the sidewalk, the longer we go without hugging our friends, and the longer we go without being able to travel — or even *plan* to travel — to be with our family abroad, the more chronic it'll become, potentially taking on more numerous and unpredictable forms.

At the time of writing this very sentence in early March 2021, almost a whole year in lockdown in the UK, we have seen myriad ways in which proximal loneliness governs our bodies and impels particular actions, resulting in a splattering of responses and responsibilities. Combined with other emotions pervasive in the prolonged lockdown and its resulting institutional measures and technological reconfigurations, many of us have become, to varying degrees, accustomed to the viral way of life. Terms like 'zoom meetings' and 'lockdown regulations' don't sound so strange or scary anymore. Attending virtual events on my laptop and the responsibilities that come with it — such as muting myself when not speaking to prevent potential echo or spillage of background noise — no longer require such deliberate thought. Masks found their place in every coat pocket along with travel-size bottles of hand sanitiser.

Once an unknown melody that disrupted our composition, COVID-19 has gradually found its way into the synchronised harmony that Frank and I share. It forced us to change the melodies and harmonies that we were used to, making us modify our rhythm and tunes of our behaviours. And with the gradual changes we make, our new, COVID-influenced behaviours started to feel increasingly 'normal' with time, and eventually became new habits, new emergent practices embodied in our human and canine flesh (see Haraway 2003).

These new habits are comprised of new techniques of the body, “the ways in which ... men [*sic*] know how to use their bodies” (Mauss 1979, 50). For example, being on the road instead of the sidewalk for large portions of our walks is starting to feel normal. When my eyes receive the information that there is a pedestrian coming toward me metres away, I use my spine to twist my body to look both ways to make sure there is no car coming my way. I use my vocal cords to call Frank so that he stops to look at me while shortening the lead on Frank with my hands just in case he decides to walk forward unexpectedly upon seeing a pigeon or a cat. I then step down to the road with my legs and feet in order to avoid breaching the social distancing measure with the oncoming pedestrian. In lockdown, my body has practised this action enough that it is now habituated; I don’t have to think so much before I execute this action.

I sense a kind of loneliness and its consequences in Frank, too: it was on a beautiful afternoon in mid-late May 2020 that I first noticed that he was no longer pulling me back toward the sidewalk when we had to walk on the road. While I won’t pretend that it is possible for me know exactly what he is feeling or thinking, I have witnessed some changes in his behaviour and mood in lockdown that I (partially anthropocentrically and partially ethologically) understand as his experience of proximal loneliness. He has become more affectionate toward me than ever, yet more wary of other people and their dogs that we had to physically avoid, sometimes very suddenly, for reasons that I couldn’t make intelligible to Frank. With reduced opportunities for canine socialisation in lockdown, he seemed to have decided that strangers and their dogs were now our enemies that we shouldn’t be so physically close to, enemies he should bark away. In this way, he has gotten more reactive toward anyone at the door, motorcycles, bicycles, and joggers, but more playful and cheekier whenever he got a chance to be with his (best and only) friend, Jasper. His sensory perceptions and bodily movements have changed post-outbreak and in lockdown, and in turn brought about changes to our sensibilities and responsibilities.

For example, in our COVID-infused environment and its sensibilities, the act of walking outdoors created different possibilities that Frank and I could actualise (de Certeau 1984, 254). So, in face of these new possibilities, we co-developed new techniques of the body in order to actualise the

possibility of walking on the road for social distancing, which evoked proximal loneliness in both of us, though manifesting in different ways. While I've come to feel physically and emotionally distant from, as well as anxious with, those around me, Frank's proximal loneliness manifested as nerves around strangers. This affected our care practices: while I felt cared for by Frank who kept me company whenever we braved stepping out into the contagious air — and potentially violently racist — outdoors, I cared for him by engaging in training activities designed to help him understand that there was no need to bark at everything and everyone passing us by. Connected by the leash and the lure of Frank's favourite treats, our bodies thus ongoingly actualise and adapt to the different possibilities in this viral world, fulfilling our responsibilities to one another.

This is just one example from myriad other emergent practices that we have come to embody as techniques of our bodies since the start of the lockdown. Indeed, some of our indoor habits have changed as well. With more time than ever to practice due to the sheer number of hours I spend at home now, Frank has learned how to adjust his body around mine in such a way that we can now both enjoy a daily evening cuddle without poking me with his pointy elbows. He does this by carefully surveying the arrangement of my body on the couch, and placing his body in the nooks, usually behind my slightly bent knees stacked together to the right side of my body on the couch. He awkwardly circles around a few times before he settles down, lying on my leg in such a way that I can feel every little thump of his heartbeat on my skin. Then, I make the final adjustments in my limbs as necessary in order to provide the most comfortable experience for both of us, feeling the warmth on my legs where his body meets mine, as well as in my heart. The fact that we each put in thought and care into being in comfortable proximity means something to me, and it evidently means enough for him to continue cultivating this habit day after day.

He also started following me around the flat and eyeing my every move instead of staying comfortably on the couch like he used to. Even in the middle of his nap, if he notices a slight movement, usually by sound, his eyes open to locate me. When I go to the bedroom to hang up the laundry to dry, I hear the '*pap, pap, pap*' against the wooden floor coming closer toward me until I see him settle down on the sheepskin rug by the bed to watch me do my chores. He always finds himself where he can keep his eyes on me, and this new habit on his part has been invaluable in my

dealing with loneliness that I feel in my bones. With him, I am even learning to enjoy peaceful moments of solitude with just the two of us in the rhythm of banality, despite all the distressing pandemic-related feelings I have been trying so hard to manage.

These emergent practices we have come to develop through bodily techniques thus have unmistakable affective consequences. The steps that we share next to each other on our walks while physically isolated from everybody else; the leash that connects my body to his, its tautness directly correlated to the levels of Frank's excitement and energy; the wet nose that investigates my right hand once a while to check if there are any treats; the feeling of this majestic beast's pulsing heart — they all bring us bodily and affectively closer together in a time characterised by isolation. These practices, I argue in the next section, are a form of multispecies responsibilities, or response-abilities, the “praxis of care and response” (Haraway 2012, 302) that engender and sustain our more-than-human kinship.

multispecies response-abilities against proximal loneliness

These virus-induced emergent practices that Frank and I developed and the techniques that constitute them allow us to be and become responsible/response-able to and with each other in the viral world that disallowed so many other bodily techniques. That is, these emergent practices matter because they produce, maintain, and strengthen a circuit of care and response between us, where care can be aptly defined as ‘everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair “our world ... which we seek to interweave in a complex, life sustaining web” (Tronto 1993, 103).

Understanding care in this way — not just the ‘nice’ things we do, but also the practices that are *vital* to the relationships that make up the very fibres of our lives — is an exercise of situating what it means to care in a pandemic. Here, vital doesn't just mean necessary, but also vibrant and thriving. And therefore, “[s]tanding by the vital necessity of care means standing for sustainable and flourishing relations, not merely survivalist or instrumental ones” (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 70); it means, as Donna Haraway urged, making kin, not (necessarily) babies (2015) — kinship that might

be made out of a feminist ethics of care and responsibility in the face of proximal loneliness, one that is concerned with thriving mutuality.

Together, Frank and I have learned to attune our human and canine bodies toward the mutual goal of care in our kinship. A historically situated primate and a domesticated canine whose paths have happened to cross in a specific time and space in the universe, our very bodies have become ‘yoked together’ more closely than ever in lockdown. So, we become-with one another as we maintain our vitally caring more-than-human kinship (Haraway 2012, 307). It is special that our multispecies care and response almost always happen within two metres when human physical engagements are extremely limited. And as we continue caring and responding to one another in such proximity, one of the affective consequences of our kinship — comprised of continuous maintenance and repair work to hold us response-able to one another — is the alleviation of proximal loneliness.

Frank’s caring role in the management of proximal loneliness in my lockdown doesn’t always involve overt affection. Though he has learned to cuddle, I would not describe him as a cuddly dog on the whole. But his presence is often enough: leaning on Frank while burying my nose into the plume of his soft white fur, I take a deep inhale. I catch a faint note of lilac, which is in bloom everywhere in our neighbourhood every spring and summer, in the midst of his regular dog stink that I have come to normalise and love as the smell of home — something that unfailingly transports me back to halmoni’s dogs in her blossoming garden. Our bodily closeness and our shared sensory experiences remind me that we are proximal, our somatic consciousness habituating the same “field of material-semiotic meaning making” (Haraway 2012, 307), even if we had to make a little more room for the virus.

Earlier, I explained that ‘proximal’ refers to the nearness to a specific something or someone, a specific reference point. For me, the reference — the ‘point of attachment’, the ‘speaker’ — that stays close by, participating in mutual care practices with me in these lonely times, is Frank. A dog, warm and soft and fleshy, breathing the same air as me in the same space. A kind of stinky, very hairy, and moderately barky boy who makes his presence known and felt of his own accord. Always excited for a walk or a treat, he has feelings and thoughts that he expresses through his own choices

of bodily expressions such as tilting his head in confusion, perking up his ears in curiosity, growling in annoyance, and jumping in excitement. For Frank, the reference is me. A human, warm and soft and fleshy, breathing the same air as him in the same space. Kind of stinky (but not as stinky as a dog), not very hairy, and moderately talkative human who makes her presence known and felt on her own accord. Always happy to oblige to her canine companion, I have feelings and thoughts that I express through my choices of bodily expressions such as chuckling at Frank's innocent confusion, looking for what sparked his curiosity, scratching his ears to ease his growling, and scrambling to get him to sit when his jumping becomes too much.

As such proximally connected entities, a human and a dog as kin, Frank and I are constantly “caught in a nonverbal conversation” (Abram 1996, 21), made up of ordinary, habituated, yet recognisable bodily techniques as our shared language. With the body as our vehicle of communication that is constantly influenced by other bodies, biotic or abiotic, around us, we are engaged in “a rapport with the multiple nonhuman sensibilities” (Abram 1996, 9). Every second I spend with him conversing in our bodily ways reminds me that Frank indeed is my “family, the beings with whom we are engaged, with whom we struggle and suffer and celebrate” (Abram 1996, ix). We are an entangled knot in the fabric of our multispecies ‘quaranteam’² that holds the entire tapestry together even as some threads fray and pull away as connections are weakened or lost in the pandemic through proximal loneliness. In this way, our emergent practices work to strengthen our entanglement even in the pandemic era during which I am disentangled from other (human) worlds.

In any entanglements within an assemblage, there are multiple melodies going on at once or at different times, turning into polyphonic music (see Tsing 2015). These melodies often intertwine, take turns being the dominant melody in our playful and mutual collaboration, connecting and propelling different notes, rhythms, and tunes. Frank and I, two knotted reference points in our proximal togetherness, each create our melodies in our circuit of response-abilities that echo in one another.

² This neat portmanteau that I am personally a very big fan of combines ‘quarantine’ and ‘team’, reminding us of the teamwork — mutual care and response — involved in kinship.

How we care for and respond to one another has undoubtedly changed in the pandemic, and it will likely continue to change as the situation unfolds further. How we look back on loneliness that we faced before the pandemic, now that proximal loneliness has become so ubiquitous, will affect our understanding of loneliness even beyond the pandemic. As we adopt new techniques of the body and habits, the bodily arrangements involved in our care and response will also change in turn. But keeping up with these uncomfortable new changes is a necessary and important part of our kinship across the species boundary. In these uncertain, lonely, and daunting times, perhaps all we can do is to keep finding emergent practices that hold us response-able in the eyes of one another, turning them into collaborative notes in our mostly symphonic, but sometimes cacophonous, pandemic concerto.

Elton and Paulie

Patricia, Elton’s human, has had a rough time with depression. She used to isolate herself easily and struggled with motivation, as she often felt a lack of purpose and meaning in her everyday life. She also used to be a nervous driver who rarely drove long distances. But Elton turned things around. Treading the fine line between tough love and TLC, he provides structure to Patricia’s day by forcing her to get up, go out, take in the world, keep going, yet also being very loving and sweet to her in their mundane interactions involved in getting up, going out, taking in the world, and continuing on day after day.

Elton doesn’t need to consciously ‘work’ in order to help Patricia with her mental health. Just being himself is more than enough to make her happy. All the simple things that he enjoys (his interminable enthusiasm for a rubber ball, for example) reminds her of the insight that comes from the sheer simplicity of his joyful life. He helps put all her big worries into perspective: going with what makes you happy at any given moment — whether a rubber ball or a nice pizza — is perhaps the most simple yet extremely effective way to find joy and pleasure in life.



fig. 28 – Patricia and Elton



Agatha and Paulie

Paulie, Agatha's German spitz mittel, has similar responsibilities. He gets her through the day and helps her deal with anxiety in calm and measured ways. He takes his role as her psychiatrist very seriously: when she used to have frequent panic attacks, he would climb on her lap and stay with her, sitting still until it was all over and she was okay. When she struggled with eating and weight, he encouraged her to eat by showing his interest in her food. Agatha now feels that she has left the harshest of days behind. She thanks Paulie for that. "Without him, I honestly wouldn't be here talking to you today. I wouldn't be here".

Paulie looks at her knowingly. He still keeps an eye on her even though he knows she's okay now. He just can't help it. Even when Agatha gets up just to go to the bathroom, he drops everything he's doing just to follow her. 'Hi mummy, just checking up on you', he greets her as she comes out of the bathroom. "I can't even go to the bathroom by myself! He watches me like a hawk", Agatha laughs, throwing her hands up in the air in pretend-disbelief with Paulie following her back to the living room with his eyes glued to her. He *does* take his job very seriously.

Z /creative ecologies of multispecies kinship

Being an amateur musician has taught me some lessons for which I have been continually grateful over the past twenty or so years. They have benefitted me in many aspects of life, not just in musical performance. It taught me the dexterity and hand-eye coordination as a technical player dedicated to precision; it taught me the importance of commitment and accountability as a member of an ensemble; it taught me perseverance and endurance as a musician who must always work on her craft through an endless loop of mistakes and corrections. But it wasn't until Frank came into my life that I learned to find a sense of joy in sharing and *making* multispecies music with my canine contemporary.

I managed to fit a digital piano in the bedroom of our tiny one-bedroom flat in Edinburgh during the fieldwork. It sits flush against the windowsill with a pink dining chair that I got on sale at IKEA tucked haphazardly between the bedframe and the keyboard. The bedroom door often gets shut when I practice in order to minimize the noise leakage to the neighbours, but it inevitably gets pushed open by Frank (more precisely, his pointy 'snoot'¹). He then either hops onto my bed and sits close to me, or settles down after circling about a few times into a tightly curled position I call the 'croissant' or 'doughmutt' (doughnut + mutt), occasionally sighing and shifting his body and rustling the bedding.

As I play the piano for the audience of one, I find myself paying attention to the rhythms of his breathing, his body, and the atmospheric ripples he creates with his presence. I attune to the more-than-human affects in which my performance creates certain "rhythms, valences, moods, sensations, tempos, and lifespans" (Stewart 2011, 445) for and through the entangled assemblage of the human, the dog, and the numerous things forming an ordered mess within the bedroom. He sporadically lets out a sigh and shifts his body on the bed as he routinely does when he snoozes, and the feathers in the duvet rustle with the movement of his body. He intermittently wakes from his nap with slumber

¹ 'snoot' means the dog's — although it can apply to various other animals — nose/snout in 'doggo language'.

still in his eyes, licks his lips, and stretches all four of his limbs and places his paws on my body. He thus adds a delicate, ethereal tune that organically threads whatever it is that I am playing at the given moment with his body.

In this way, Frank breathes air and flexibility into something more baroque and perhaps a bit stiffer and rigidly structured like Bach's inventions; he adds some flippancy to something more sombre like Chopin's nocturnes; and he forms an atmospheric harmony with something more free-form and fickle like Bill Evans, which seems to be his favourite.² The musical and rhythmic nature of "the lived, the carnal, the body" (Lefebvre 1992, 18) radiate and fill the room. The bedroom thus transforms into a small concert hall in which all the living and non-living things within it become animate in a symphony in the fleeting yet embodied present, liminal between the past that keeps passing us by and the future that does not exist yet, just out of grasp.

Inspired by these ordinary yet transformative experiences, this chapter consists of a series of small experiments in imagining and describing the ecologies (broadly conceptualised as affective and bodily engagements that we are involved in as living beings in a shared spatial as well as temporal environment) of more-than-human kinship with dogs as a creative, rhythmic, and enjoyable entanglement. I draw from all the senses I possess and use through my body as my instrument of choice, and treat other bodies, living or non-living, as instruments in their own right, too. I commit to an honest description of our ecologies as experienced through my senses, for "[w]hat we can describe has meaning; what has meaning gives pleasure" (Shaw 2017, 14). I purposefully engage with minimal theory in this chapter. Using 'weak theory' as its foundation, the chapter's arguments are embedded in its form more than its content. Inspired by the works of anthropologist Stewart (2008), geographer Wright (2015), and literary theorist/semiotician Barthes (2002), I take seriously the significance of "attuning and attending" (Stewart 2008, 72) as practices through which multispecies kinship may be created, described, and understood. Paying close attention to processes of multispecies kinship practices, as Wright (2015) argued, speaks "to the ways belonging is actively

² Jazz seems to be Frank's favourite genre of music. The eagerness and promptness with which he walks into the bedroom when he hears jazz (compared to other genres of music) is telling of this. He also seems to be an especially enthusiastic fan of Dave Brubeck and Jerome Kern.

created through the practices of a wide range of human and more-than-human agents, including animals, places, emotions, things and flows” (2015, 392). I place a particular emphasis on rhythms as they are created and co-created in shared spaces, or, as Barthes (2002) called it, ‘proxemics’, the affective use of immediate space as a specialized cultural elaboration (2002, 111).

Calling our affective and bodily engagements ‘ecologies’ is a deliberate diction for two purposes. First, deep-seated — and perhaps inescapable — anthropocentric thought falsely dichotomised humans and the rest of the living world. Something as conventional as the disciplinary separation between *anthropology* and *biology* confirms this (and of course, even within anthropology, the arbitrarily enforced divorce of nature and culture has been foundational in the discipline’s history; see Ingold 1990). By referring to more-than-human rendezvous as ‘ecologies’, then, I am hoping to bring the *anthropos* into the unbounded fold of the *bios*, the animate world that humans are an inextricable part of.

Second, as Ingold (2016) reminded us, the word ‘ecology’ shares its etymological roots with ‘economy’. The prefix ‘eco-’ comes from the Ancient Greek word *oikos*, which means household or habitat. While ‘economy’ is focused on managing the household/habitat (*oikos + nemo*), ‘ecology’ places its emphasis on studying it (*oikos + logia*). This comparison isn’t just etymologically relevant, but epistemically significant: it forces us to think about the human as animals implicated in not only the economic management of domestic households, but also in existing in and engaging with their habitat that we share with other animals, plants, microbes, and non-living things. The use of the term ‘ecology’, then, is my modest attempt at dismantling of the nature-culture dichotomy that has been a firm colonial pillar in the discipline.

The chapter is organised into four disparate movements based on a classical symphony, each movement subdivided into smaller themes comprised of idiosyncratic melodies — short ethnographic and ethographic (van Dooren and Rose 2016) stories made of sounds and gestures with their own rhythms — that intertwine and mutate with one another as they develop throughout the score. The movements loosely reflect the typical characteristics of the corresponding structures in a symphony: *allegro*, the first movement, is bright and vivacious, introducing the melodies created by

dogs and their humans through ordinary occasions, such as feeding and grooming. The second movement is *adagio*, peaceful but expressive, perfect for playing out the musically affectionate and lyrical ways in which we communicate with one another across the species boundary. It is followed by the *minuet*, a dance, which examines the choreographies involved in our kinship, especially in physical activities such as walking and training. Then, we end with the *rondo*, a musical form defined by its cyclical nature, through which we can understand and appreciate our daily routine as well as the beloved game of fetch.

I visualise these different melodies as different kinds of lines — threads, traces, cuts, cracks, and creases created and experienced through bodies (see Ingold 2007) — that form the warp and weft of the fabric of everyday life with dogs. As dogs and their humans wander through shared environments, these lines of melodies weave, draw, sever, rupture, stitch, and etch to create scores of varying timbres, densities, tempos, and rhythms. Keeping in mind that “it is fundamentally through the practices of wayfaring that beings inhabit the world” (Ingold 2007, 89), I trace the overlapping and tangled trajectories of different lines that build the detailed scaffold for the ever-unfolding more-than-human entanglements (or, a dog’s cradle, if you will).

allegro: rhythms of care

Every interaction and movement produce tunes and rhythms that intertwine with one another through space and time, creating a polyphony and polyrhythm that permeate our environments,³ which in turn produce atmospheres that we affect and are affected by (Lefebvre 1992; Stewart 2011). Dogs and their humans thus co-create and share a complex composition in their circuit of care and response — what Haraway called ‘response-ability’ (2012). *Allegro* is an introduction to some of these interlacing resonances.

³ Polyrhythm is the simultaneous use of two or more rhythms that seemingly contrast one another; polyphony is a musical texture made of two or more independent melodies (compared with: monophony, which is a texture with just one melody, and homophony, which is a texture with one dominant melody accompanied by chords).

dinnertime

“It’s dinner time. I’ll show you how I make his dinner”, said Michelle, leading me to the kitchen where Ru’s food has been defrosting. Ru, her ‘heckin’ floofy’ (very fluffy) black-and-tan Pomeranian who weighs just over two kilograms, followed us knowingly while refusing to abandon his dried pig ear chew that looked disproportionately huge in his tiny mouth. This was the beginning of ‘dinner preparation’ as a (musical) event, accompanied by a dog who participated as a performer in his own right. ‘A synchronous multispecies polyphony — could that be a coincidentally, but wonderfully, artistic effect of domestication?’ I daydreamed briefly in my fieldnotes until I heard Ru’s toenails tap-dancing against the hardwood floor in anticipation of food. I couldn’t help but chuckle at his excitement. I knelt and bent my torso downward so that I could be as close to eye level with him as my back would allow without having to be on my stomach, and said, “you know it’s dinner time! Yes, you do. Delicious dinner!” in one of many dog voices that I keep in my repertoire. He responded quite positively, allowing me to give him some gentle scratches around his neck. I ruffled the plume of fur, confirming our newfound friendship. “Are we friends now? We’re friends now”.

I briefly turned away from the harmonies I’ve formed with the happy Pomeranian so that Michelle could show me the first part of Ru’s dinner. It was time for me to listen to Michelle’s solo: “okay, so, it’s literally just like, a cube. When I mush it up, you’ll see rice in it”, she said while grabbing a fork to mash the pre-blended raw food made of raw salmon, rice, and some vegetables. “They’re pink and fleshy and what not”, she continued. It indeed came frozen as ‘pink and fleshy’, pre-portioned cubes that required thawing and mashing at home before feeding. “We buy them at Pets at Home,⁴ and they’re really good. But if you really want to make it from scratch, they also sell turkey trachea, chicken feet, diced breast and leg, and bone. But Ru really enjoys his salmon, which is really good for his skin and fur as well”, she said while mashing the defrosted cube in Ru’s ceramic bowl with a fork with metronomic beats. *Clink, clink, clink*. “It’s all blended in. You can see the rice and some carrots in it”, she pointed at the little white and orange bits in the food, and I nodded. Ru, having

⁴ Pets at Home is a large UK-based retailer of pet supplies that also provides in-store veterinary care.

squirrelled away his pig ear in his blanket in the living room at some point, joined me in watching the food while waiting on the floor with his hind legs jutting straight out to the back in a position that dog people call the ‘sploot’. The atmosphere swelled with anticipatory delight as the melodies all gathered in the kitchen — this was perhaps what Barthes called “the fantasmatic force of Living-Together” (2002, 5).



fig. 29 – Ru in a sploot.

But Ru began to grow restless as the smell of mashed-up food teased his chickpea-sized nose. He circled around a few times while letting out tiny whimpers and smallest little *arrfs* and *grrrs* with his gaze fixated on Michelle, signifying his rising impatience. The accompanying melody of the dog threatened to become cacophonous, and the synchronicity felt about to break into a mess. The air now filled with not an anticipatory, but a discomfiting sense of something about to happen, perhaps a sequence of loud barks or other dissonances (see Stewart 2011). I tried to soothe him:

“someone’s getting impatient... it’s okay. Oh, you’re so floofy. The cutest little man with the floofiest hair. Yes, you are!” With Ru temporarily appeased, we managed to avoid a full-blown discord. But this slight rupture in the flow also called into question the dynamic of power in multispecies kinship: the subtle changes in atmospheres and configurations in the emergent rhythms of food and feeding emphasised that “[p]ower — the subtlety of power — is effected through disrhythmy, heterorhythmy” (Barthes 2002, 9).

Michelle then suddenly apologised for Ru’s barking at me earlier when I first entered the flat — “sorry he was barking at you earlier. He’s just like, ‘no, this is my turf!’” I told her it was totally fine, that it must be confusing for the little guy to have strangers come into his space. The conversation leaped back in time for this little moment, deviating from the topic of Ru’s dinner. But this tangential tune didn’t last long, as Ru decided to make his “demand for idiorrhymy ... in opposition to power” (Barthes 2002, 35). Michelle and I were jerked back into the present by Ru, who could — or would — no longer wait. He punctured and punctuated the human conversation — *bork!* — in a forceful *sforzando*. It was time to wrap up this peripheral tune and get to eating.

With that, Michelle’s full attention was back on Ru’s meal. This was the final part of the symphony’s first movement: the recapitulation. We have been through the introduction of the melodies (on the theme of ‘Ru’s dinner’), which turned into the development of the melody (which tangentially led to Michelle’s apology), but it must all come to an end with the recapitulation, a reminder of the main theme, the most important thing: Ru’s dinner.⁵ Michelle quickly measured out various dog food ingredients to appease Ru’s hurrying while saying “because he’s had vegetables already, I’ll give him just a few [frozen peas]”. The frozen peas made a rapid succession of light and pleasant clinking noise against the ceramic bowl, adding to the quickening tempo of the impatient atmosphere as we headed to the climax. “I’ll also give him a little bit of kibbles. Organic”. The sound of the kibbles hitting the bowl was a little more muted than the earlier sound made by the frozen peas. “And this is really random, but Ru doesn’t like it when his food touches, so I need to separate it like this. He’s very particular”, Michelle added, showing me the ready-to-serve meal.

⁵ To further the musical analogy, his bark served as the *D. S. (dal segno) al coda*, telling us to remember the *sign*, when he first *arrf*-ed at us, and to jump to the *coda*, the happy finale where he finally gets to have his meal.



fig. 30 – defrosting cubes of raw food / Ru’s untouched foods

As soon as Michelle put down the bowl full of untouched foods, Ru leapt to it — not a moment missed. The ensemble created with the sound of the fork, the frozen peas, and the kibbles clinking against his bowl, my pen scribbling madly against my fieldwork notebook, Michelle’s voice, my voice, Ru’s whimpering, then barking all culminated in this moment, a conclusion to the dinnertime movement. This “poesis of the ordinary” (Stewart 2008, 74), however, was neither smooth nor innocent: the score of the dinnertime was made from a mixture of different threads that held different kinds of force. Power dynamics pushed and pulled living and non-living things mingled in concert and dissonance in various directions, as a group of things “throws itself together and then floats past or *sticks* for some reason” (Stewart 2008, 74), changing affective atmospheres as things meshed and clashed. But this present moment was fleeting, soon becoming the past. Michelle and I watched Ru lick up the last bit of the raw food and move on to the kibbles before Michelle led me to the cupboards to show me more of his numerous belongings, starting a new musical story with different harmonies and rhythms, creating different lines to follow.

grooming time

Michelle's enthusiasm about her life with Ru knew no bounds. As she took me to the closet by the entrance to the flat to grab Ru's stuff for Ru's evening grooming, she informed me that Ru had his own cubbyhole in the closet. I immediately spotted a box labelled 'Ru's hygiene', which made me chuckle. She noticed my interest and asked, "do you want me to take you through it?" I must've nodded perhaps a little too keenly because it made her laugh as she said "Yeah? Let's get crazy".

Michelle grabbed 'Ru's hygiene' box, which was packed full of grooming tools and products and we came back into the living room where she started taking stuff out of the box, introducing me to each and every thing and its role. It felt like I was watching a YouTube video about Pomeranian grooming: "an absolute must-have when you have a Pomeranian is..." she dragged out the sentence — as if with a *fermata* on the last syllable — creating a sense of anticipation that led me to the edge of my metaphorical seat.⁶ "tushie wipes!" she proclaimed dramatically before bursting into laughter. "No matter how much you try to trim around the bum..." she trailed off to tell Ru who followed us to the closet — "I know, sorry this is a little intrusive" — but returned quickly to the main discussion of tushie wipes. "I try to keep a little square free around his butt, because, honestly, he really just has the most hairy butt there is, and things getting caught is just not fun. So, tushie wipes, super important".

"The products that I use are... so, I've been following this Spanish breeder and she invented these products. They're absolutely amazing. I'll never go back to what I was using before. She has volume ones for when she — I know, it's crazy — goes to showing. There's a shampoo and spray conditioner. I use the conditioner twice a week, and it helps with removing mats. I also use it when I'm blow-drying him. And the other one is hydrating stuff".

⁶ A *fermata*, or a 'grand pause', is a musical notation indicating that the note should be sustained for a longer duration than its normal value.



*fig. 31 – spray conditioner and hydrating stuff
(and the tushie wipes in the background)*

As the grooming products came out one by one, Ru seemed to have sensed that he was going to be groomed. He sniffed around the products as well as the crate that Michelle used as a makeshift grooming table, occasionally glancing at Michelle with a tinge of confusion. Their daily grooming ritual was being delayed because of my presence, a new melody and rhythm thrown into Michelle and Ru's well-rehearsed routine. While letting me smell some of the products by passing the various bottles one by one, hand to hand, Michelle acknowledged Ru's glances: "I'm sorry Ru. Yes, I'll brush you in a second". I couldn't help but think that I was the one creating a rift in their rhythm at this moment — if I weren't here taking up Michelle's time to explain all of this, Ru could've been brushed already. Ru was over it: he walked over, sulking, to his blanket and started digging an imaginary trench in which to hide the pig ear that was half-finished. His melody wandered away from us.

Letting Ru be for a while in his own rhythmic trajectory, Michelle took me through every single one of the tools and products in the box, including the various brushes and combs, each with a specific purpose. More sprays and conditioners of various scents, a pin comb, a slicker brush, a smaller slicker brush (actually made for guinea pigs, but that made it perfect for Ru's tiny ears), a number of combs in different sizes and materials, a toothbrush, and a pair of small grooming scissors. The tools, as they were laid out in a neat assortment, built up a sense of something about to happen, accumulating anticipatory "density and texture ... through bodies, dramas, and scenes" (Stewart 2008, 76), ultimately giving rise to the main theme of *grooming time*.

Michelle lifted Ru up and placed him on the crate, telling me that she was putting some money aside now so that she could get a proper grooming table that would allow her to groom Ru while standing, which would help with her sore back. Ru was pleased to finally bask in Michelle's attention. "We usually start with the bottom. He's not always 100% when I'm doing his bum", said Michelle while gently lifting Ru's tail to expose what she described as "the most hairy butt there is" earlier. Ru had a look of concern. Dogs don't generally like having their hind sides exposed to them in this way (who would?), as it makes them feel vulnerable, so the concern wasn't unwarranted. "The tail goes up...", she paused while holding up Ru's tail and grabbing one of the numerous brushes. "And I brush the fur in the direction it grows in. Pomeranians' fur grows forward. You'll never see a Pomeranian with its fur growing toward the back", she explained as she started brushing Ru with firm, short strokes showing her expert knowledge of Ru's body.

The bristles of the brush found their way through Ru's long, dense fur, making light scratching noises as they raked through any tangles in the way. The brush moved in a series of *staccato* strokes, stopping once every while for Michelle to evaluate if his butt had enough brushing for now. Her verbal explanations of her grooming techniques overlapped harmoniously with the sound that the brush made in contact with Ru's body. I watched their musically entwined bodies in awe as she worked quickly but methodically, brushing Ru just the way that he needs to be and the way he likes to be brushed. The tempo built up as the brushing gained momentum. The living room buzzed with the repeating patterns of the quick bursts of brushing followed by a short and silent period.

“Because he’s still growing and his fur is developing, never brush backwards; always brush forward”, Michelle said emphatically as she moved on to Ru’s torso, spraying some conditioner on him. The liquid dispersed through the aerosolising nozzle of the bottle, and the scent of the conditioner gradually wafted throughout the living room, changing the atmospheric affect. All three of us waited for a brief moment while the conditioner was sufficiently absorbed by Ru’s coat, and Michelle ran her fingers through the fur on his torso to check if there were any tangles. The lingering smell in the air gave me a brief opportunity to remind myself to call on all the senses without privileging one over others. As Lefebvre (1992) wrote, smells were a significant part of rhythms that functioned “as traces that mark out rhythms” (1992, 31) — they differentiated between the time of day, the humidity in the air, and in this case, where Michelle was in Ru’s grooming process.

Upon detangling any knots that she could find with her hand, she grabbed a larger brush with and started brushing from back to front in long, *legato* strokes that contrasted with the *staccato* brushing technique she used for his butt. The sounds and rhythms created with this brush reflected this change in technique: the melody has developed into long, drawn-out, but deeper scratches that were speckled with almost static-like noises here and there that signified that a tangle was undone with the pins on the brush. With the slower tempo, the atmosphere relaxed, too, changing the moods in our bodies in turn. I wasn’t furiously scribbling fieldnotes anymore. Michelle’s arms were no longer making short bursts of brushing, and her hands were more relaxed on the grip she had on the handle of the brush. And Ru — he was just thrilled that his butt was no longer so baldly on display. Freshly groomed and handsome, he looked like a small lion with the floofiest mane. With the main parts of the grooming finished, Michelle did a quick trim of the ears. and there he was, the star of the show. He stood proudly on the crate with a cheeky smile and allowed Michelle to add some light finishing touches with some short brush strokes around his chest. Once he was groomed to her satisfaction, she lifted him down to the floor delicately, marking the end of the *grooming time* movement.



fig. 32 – the floofiest butt / the finishing touches

adagio: conversations of love

The approach to this movement is a bit different from *Allegro*'s. Comprised of short vignettes, *Adagio* is a movement that explores slow and lyrical moments of love. These moments are more like ambient reverberations of warmth rather than the active and dynamic melodies and rhythms explored in the former movement. These vignettes are short because the moments they are based on occurred over a relatively short period of time, but they are densely woven with rich and intense affective textures that bond dogs and their humans in a conversation — verbal and nonverbal — of love. And it was this richness and intensity that often had an effect of stretching out a short moment, making them feel like they lasted for longer than it had in measurable time, or even as if time stood still for a little while.

café cuddles

On a typically cold and wet day in November 2019, Frank and I arrived early at Mimi's Bakehouse, a popular café specialising in baked goods, where Jane and I had agreed to meet for our interview. While waiting, I ordered a scone and a coffee, realising that I'd forgotten — as per usual — to have breakfast. The café hummed with countless noises from the espresso machines, glassware, metal utensils, and chatter, and delectable smells of pastries and coffee lingered in the air. Jane arrived shortly after the waitress brought my order to the table. She set her handbag down and placed her black shearling jacket on the seat of the booth for Leonard, her long-haired chihuahua.

To my surprise and delight, Leonard came up to my lap as soon as he was set down on the jacket. But my excitement turned out to be misplaced, because he only wanted to sniff my scone. I giggled at his brazen attempt while pushing the small plate away from Leonard's inquisitive nose. "You're going right for it, huh?" Jane realised what was happening and laughed: "Oh, Leonard. Because he's so small, he knows he can just sneak in. He doesn't even like scones! He just does it for show". Amusingly, Frank, who almost always manages to puppy-dog-eye his way into getting some scone from me, was oblivious to all of this, as he had fallen asleep by my feet under the table.

Even with the scone out of reach, Leonard stuck around. He put his front paws on my lap and looked up at me with his expressive eyes. His paws were so small, and he barely weighed anything, but in that moment, all my bodily attention was focused on him. His toes pressed on my leg so slightly yet firmly. His eyes gazed into mine, and I saw myself reflected in his dark, bulbous eyes. Everything else around us faded to the background a little bit, even Jane. "Do you want to come sit with me?" I asked Leonard, feeling his silky hair on my fingers that I placed on his torso to make sure he didn't jump on or under the table. I wondered what he was thinking as we stared into each other's eyes for a while longer. I studied his face, and he studied mine. The moment stretched on as our bodies got intimately accustomed to one another's presence through our more-than-human senses, our "forms of alertness to the poesis of a something snapping into place, if only for a minute" (Stewart 2008, 81).

Our cosy introductions to each other ended when he decided he had got everything he needed to know from me — for now. He wandered back to sit next to Jane, on the woolly side of the shearling jacket she had laid down for him earlier. Jane and I continued the interview, chatting about Leonard and Jane’s husband. The varying pitches of clinking and clanking from utensils and dishware as well as the hubbub from other patrons in the café provided a comforting backdrop to our verbal and bodily conversations among us, two humans and two dogs getting to know each other.

The dogs moved around only once a while during the interview: Leonard went on Jane’s lap for a little bit before he decided it was too warm and moved back to lie down on the jacket, curled up “like a baby deer”, to borrow Jane’s expression. Frank sleepily came to ask me for a few pats on the head before plopping himself down on the tiled floor of the café again, licking his lips a few times after getting a few small pieces of the scone from me along with the head pats. The slow and steady rhythm of loving adagio reverberated for a while, our bodily tunes forming unbroken melodies and harmonies.

As the interview was coming to its end, Leonard decided to walk on to my lap, putting all four of his tiny paws in my palm and curling up. I lifted him into my arms, holding him like a baby. “If he didn’t like you, he would be struggling to get away”, said Jane, looking at Leonard with tenderness and love in her eyes. I realised that I’ve never held a chihuahua before. His warm, petite frame was supported entirely by my arms, his head leaning against my sternum. My heart pounded in sheer pleasure; no doubt Leonard felt it, too. “Such a sweetheart. Oh, he’s shutting his eyes as well. That’s adorable”, Jane remarked as Leonard started falling asleep, his entire body weight pressing on to my torso, arms, and hands. In this moment, Leonard and I have formed a space of belonging through a nonverbal — but perhaps more powerful in that way — dialogue that slowed down the tempo of our interaction even further, thickening and intensifying its intimate and affective density. No theory could “encompass the present and shut down the future” (Gibson-Graham 2006, 8) as I held the tiny dog as time flowed like viscous syrup drizzled on a stack of pancakes.

the smell of earth

I invited Pariwana, a fellow PhD student in my cohort, and Regina, her black miniature schnauzer, to come over to my flat for our interview in early January 2020. Pariwana and I had known each other for over a year by then, and Regina and Frank were well-acquainted as well. We'd gone out for walks with our dogs on a few occasions and Regina had stayed overnight at our place when Pariwana needed a dog sitter. Even then, the initial ruckus that began with a knock on the door was unavoidable. Frenzied barking and excited sniffing noises filled the air in my narrow hallway before I was able to herd the dogs and Pariwana into the living room. The dogs settled down when they both got offered some treats to chomp on, and Pariwana and I could then sit down on the couch and take a breath.

The dogs mostly kept to themselves during the interview. Frank, who had been previously intimidated by the audacious Regina (who was maybe a third of his size at most), cowered under the dining table while Regina had the run of the place. She helped herself to Frank's treats, food, and water; she strutted around the living room with Frank's toy in her mouth. I watched the scene play out in an amused kind of disbelief: Frank sat and watched Regina steal his kibbles, one by one, and did nothing about it, while Pariwana tried to stop her by firmly saying "no", interrupting the conversation between the humans, but Regina was too quick and too sneaky, and she was more than happy to march to the beat of her own drums. Our rhythms scattered, like we were all reading different pieces of music, written in different keys and time signatures.

Eventually, though, Regina got bored and came up to Pariwana for a cuddle on the couch. Frank, feeling safe enough now, and perhaps a little conscious and envious of the attention Regina was getting, crawled out from under the dining table to finish his breakfast that Regina had so generously left for him. Once he was done eating, he decided he wanted to join the whole group on the couch. On my small, old, and sunken-in two-seater couch, all four of us arranged our bodies to fit like jigsaw puzzle pieces. My north-facing flat's January chill was replaced with warmth that radiated from the three other living, breathing bodies squished tightly in contact with mine.

Our conversation flowed sweetly, to a steady rhythm, while the dogs cuddled in. The assemblage of our overlapping bodies, the blankets, the pillows formed a soft, homey atmosphere around us, enveloping our bodies in a shroud of contentment. We talked about our lives with our dogs, and Pariwana recounted what had just happened that morning: “I was just lying there, Regina’s head here [pointing to her shoulder], and John next to me. And I just said out loud, ‘my life is awesome’. My life is so awesome”, she laughed. Her face lit up in utter adoration, and she kissed the top of Regina’s head. Regina, who was tucked in snugly into Pariwana’s arms, looked up at Pariwana with love-drunk eyes.

Pariwana then held out one of Regina’s front paws, bringing it to her nose in a smooth, well-rehearsed gesture. “I love the smell of her paws”, she said, inhaling deeply first, then exhaling with a satisfied “*ahhh*”. I intuitively did the same with Frank’s paw. “It smells like earth”, Pariwana stated with a smile that lingered on her face. I took another inhale of Frank’s paw, imagining the rich, earthy microbiome that inhabited the nooks and crannies of his hairy paws, giving them their distinct earthy smell. Instead of talking, Pariwana and I sat in silence, smelling our dogs’ paws, taking our time to indulge ourselves with the olfactory experience that we evidently both loved so much.

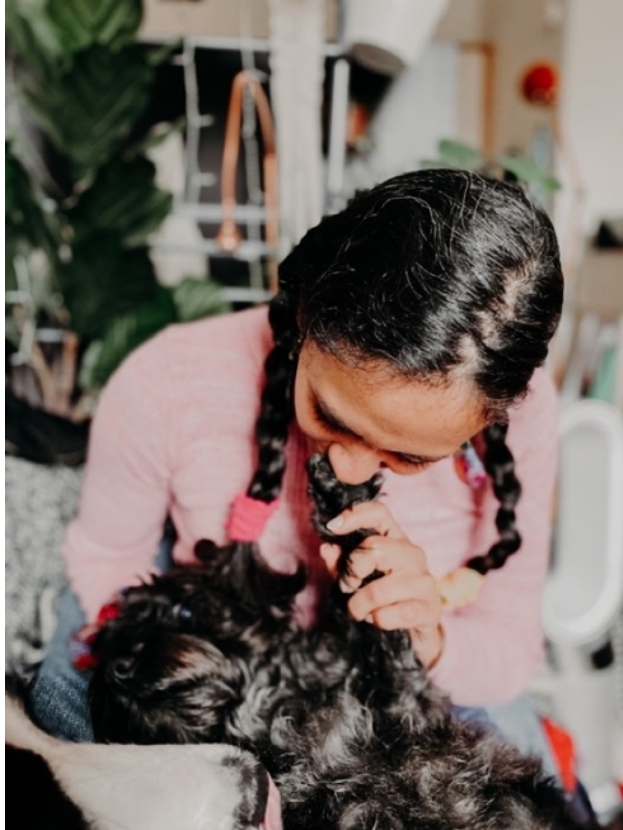


fig. 33 – the smell of earth

In this moment, it became certain that “[i]t is not only in music that one produces perfect harmonies. The body produces a garland of rhythms, one could say a bouquet, though these words suggest an aesthetic arrangement, as if the artist nature had foreseen beauty — the harmony of the body (of bodies) — that results from all its history” (Lefebvre 1992, 30). The organic and material histories that accumulated on our dogs’ paws produced a bouquet of smells, smells that indicated the harmonic paths of where the dogs have been, what their paws have touched and picked up: the streets and hills of Edinburgh undoubtedly swarming with visible and invisible critters and dirt, the area rug in the flat that has been unintentionally but inevitably woven with dog hair, canine saliva loaded with dog food particles, and more. Time seemed to have paused for a while as we stopped talking to deliberately breathe in the scents from our slightly confused canine companions — our nostrils flaring to take an inhale, our human olfactory senses attuned to these historically situated and harmonious microbial and canine bouquets. And there, in their fragrantly stinky paws, we found

love — time-stopping love shaping and shaped by our bodies, compelled by our more-than-human *habitus* as well as *umwelten* to participate in this ordinary and sensory kind of kin-making practice.

Here, I am reminded of Clark's (2007) work on the *generosity* of domestication in everyday contexts. While there may be a tendency to “apply a calculus to life and labor such that the value of all things can be known and the costs or benefits of any action discerned” (Clark 2007, 50), our kinship — as Pariwana, Regina, Frank, and I experienced in that moment — evaded this utilitarian and rational logic. Then, not emerging out of measurable need or function, our mutual domestication was an immeasurable, open-ended, and *generous* process that stemmed from *excess* outside of the closed circuit of calculable economy. In this way, our kinship had to do with modes of affective encounters and engagement that broke down the species boundaries by multidirectional and nonvolitional ‘giving’ of one another’s bodies that made our co-existence possible and pleasurable (Clark 2007, 57; also see Tsing 2015). These generous domesticating practices — like smelling dogs’ paws — gave rise to “the possibility of a shared world” (2007, 62) that we constructed and got to know by wayfaring with and through one another (Ingold 2007) — including smelling the dog’s paw for a glimpse of the microbial worlds in Edinburgh that surrounded and permeated our bodies.

minuet: a multispecies dance

After the slow and sensual *Adagio*, *Minuet*, the next movement, picks up the pace as the piece progresses. *Minuet*, for me, is the most exciting part of the symphony through which to explore multispecies kinship and entanglements. It is a coupled dance, requiring the participants to be somatically cooperative and to operate within the same metrical cadence. In this movement, then, I explore the ways in which walking with a dog as well as participating in training activities can often take on dance-like qualities with their rhythmic movements, thereby forming a multispecies choreography.

an ambulatory dance

Frank and I scheduled to meet up with Bella and Jasper in September 2020 for a socially distanced walk to the Braids. Because Bella has been busy preparing for her Veterinary Board exam as a final-year vet student (and the pandemic, of course), we hadn't been able to go on group walks as frequently as we used to, even though we lived on the same street and often used to let our dogs explore the Braids or Blackford Hill together. To eliminate any need for shared indoor time, we went up to their front door, rang the doorbell, and waited for them to come outside.

Frank's anticipation grew as he waited eagerly for Jasper to come out, refusing to sit down even when I asked him to for his favourite biscuit made of duck and carrots. He often pulled me toward their door whenever we walked by their place, and I'd had to coax him away as he looked back longingly — he missed his best (and only) friend, who he hadn't seen in weeks. He was deprived of his time with Jasper, the only dog that he wrestled with. I knew this was going to be a party and a half. Frank couldn't contain his excitement as he heard the footsteps behind the big blue door. His front paws tapped around the concrete enthusiastically while his tail started wagging. His nose did a thing that I could only describe as 'going into hyperdrive'. "An opening onto a *something*, ... a thicket of connections between vague yet forceful and affecting elements" (Stewart 2008, 72) was emerging, a stirring movement of bodies and materials building up to a dance.

And the door finally opened, starting the intricate dance that we continued for the duration of our walk. Frank's body started wiggling from side to side, his tail now 'helicoptering' (going in full circles like helicopter propellers). Jasper quickly recognised Frank, and immediately quickened his steps to greet him. They kissed each other nose to nose, and then cheek to cheek. Then they briefly paused to sniff each other's bodies, only to suddenly get into the 'play hop' position where both of them simultaneously lifting their front legs up, face to face. Will it be a waltz, or will it be a wrestle?



fig. 34 – the kiss and the ‘play hop’

Jasper then showed off a special dance move that no one was expecting, hopping a full circle in a three-point-turn with his feather-duster tail sailing high in the air. Frank was elated, bouncing around Jasper with glee. He stopped occasionally to sniff Jasper, confirming again and again that it really was his best friend. Jasper ended up receiving a little hug from Frank, who couldn't help himself: Frank wrapped his front legs — his arms — around Jasper, before backing off to sniff and kiss his face again. Bella exclaimed her lyrical commentary to the joyful and heartfelt performance that unfolded before our eyes: “oh, the boys are back! The boys!”

The reunion dance ended with two happy, wiggly dogs who ultimately decided that wrestling was an indoor-only activity and signalled that they were ready to go on a walk while they were out. We started making our way toward the Braids, where Frank and Jasper adopted diverging choreographies based on different rhythms and melodies. Whereas Frank created a circular dance with other dogs he encountered, punctuated with rapid succession of inhales (wherein Frank and the other dog walked in circles while they were sniffing each other's butts), Jasper did not bother to acknowledge most of

the other dogs that passed by. But when there were no other dogs in our path, Frank and Jasper unfailingly got back together, running off to explore the woods by each other's side, sometimes joined at the hip and trotting at the same pace.

From the main concrete-paved path through the Braids, we took a staircase up through the woods to get to the paddocks where the dogs could explore the overgrown grass in the field and (thankfully) unsuccessfully hunt small rodents that made their homes under the tufts of grass. This started a new dance routine. They travelled closely together through the grass, and at times, right next to each other with their bodies touching. Then, when one or both of them (but usually Jasper) noticed any movement or sound under the grass, we got to witness what Bella accurately describes as the 'Arctic fox', one of the most impressive dance moves that Jasper had taught Frank: they leapt a surprising height into the air with all four paws, focusing on landing — with their claws as well as their teeth — on the exact spot where they think their prey is. While they were in the air, their spines curved like the crescent moon. Tough move to pull off, especially for a rather uncoordinated and clumsy dog like Frank. But he always tried his best anyway, quite endearingly. Jasper, on the other hand, had perfected the move, gracefully leaping into the tufts of grass with laser-focus. Bella told me that he had once caught a vole through his muzzle. An unfortunate thing about this beautiful yet macabre dance was that sometimes, there was a casualty, often a dancer who hadn't quite had the chance to master their own techniques and choreography within their habitat.

We made two laps around the whole field before deciding to descend. "I came here in the dark the other day, and it was so scary", Bella added as she suggested that we get out of the forested area before the sun completely disappeared. I agreed that it wasn't going to be a fun time walking through the woods on unpaved paths in the dark, so we rushed down to the entrance that we came from. As the days started getting noticeably shorter, Frank had been more panicked outside in the evenings; he was scared of the dark.

We made it back to the entrance where we started the walk before dark. "Can we get a picture of them here?" said Bella. Of course, I said yes. Bella put on her 'dog voice' and pulled out a treat to get the dogs' attention: "okay, sit, stay... look over here! Frankers! Jasper!" They both looked at the treat

straightaway. With their eyes fixed on the treat, Bella and I took multiple snaps on our phones. Jasper smiled at the camera while Frank looked like he never wanted anything more than the treat dangling in front of him. As I suspected, this photogenic moment didn't last long, as Frank stood up like a clumsy ballerina to snatch the treat, bringing this movement to a close with a tasty snack for himself and a laughter for those around him.



fig. 35 – eyes on the prize / the ballet

a training dance

On a nippy but sunny morning in early March 2020, just a few weeks before the nationwide lockdown started in the UK, I attended a dog training class run by Moira, a dog trainer I met online who generously invited me over to observe her classes. At 10:30 a.m. sharp, the ‘puppy life skills’ class began with three pups under six months of age in the room. A lanky vizsla named Lucy who had disproportionately big ears and paws to grow into, a hilariously squat corgi-mix of some sort (a

mix-breed rescue) called Opal, and a big, majestic Japanese akita named Susie. Their youth shone through their behaviour: energetic, rambunctious, but perhaps a little unsure and a bit nervous.

Each puppy came to the class with more than one person: the vizsla came with a white heterosexual couple who looked to be in their late 30s and their young daughter; the corgi-mix with a dad and his young daughter who seemed about the same age as the other child; the akita with an elderly heterosexual couple. However, only one person was appointed from each family to participate actively in the training while others observed. The mom from Lucy's family, the dad from Opal's, and the elderly woman from Susie's were appointed as the performers. The rest became the spectators to the dance that was about to begin.

Moira announced that we were going to be teaching the puppies their names today. All human eyes were on her as she emphasised the importance of consistency in training and explained why she doesn't use aversive techniques in training — “they don't mean anything to the dogs” — and only uses positive reinforcement and reward-based techniques. The puppies, on the other hand, could not have cared less, as they were dying to meet each other. They were jumping, yelping, wiggling toward one another to express their frustration at not being able to dance the way they wanted to while they were held back by their lead in the hands of their humans.

But the room soon became a whirlwind of various voices and movements as Moira taught people the choreography. They were instructed to say their dogs' names and give them a treat if they looked at them upon being called. A simple movement in the dogs' eyes and maybe a slight turn in the neck denoting a connection of sorts — that was all they were looking for. Once their canine eyes met their humans', human arms were to reach out toward the puppy with a treat in order to reinforce the desired movements — a seemingly simple move for both the dogs and their humans. Moira demonstrated the dance a few times with an imaginary dog: looking down at the imaginary dog, she called ‘Betty!’ Then, she acted as if Betty the imaginary dog looked up at her, extending her arm to give her an imaginary treat.

Lucy, the vizsla pup, was acing this part of the choreography with her electric energy. She looked right at her human's face every time she heard 'Lucy', getting a praise ('good girl!') and a treat from her human every time. Here, Moira reminded the human dancer involved in this couple that the instruction was to just give them a treat — no 'good girl'. That phrase had no place in the choreography for this specific dance, as it interfered with the goal of teaching them their name. "Their names will become 'name' plus 'good girl', and you'll have to say that every time when you want to get your dog's attention", Moira explained as she waltzed on to help Opal and her human who were struggling with the choreography. Lucy and her human kept practicing the name dance, the human now paying extra special attention on her own steps to hold back from saying 'good girl' and only moving her upper body to hand out the treat, which Lucy was happy to take.

The training dance thus demonstrated how "[h]umans break themselves in [*se dressent*] like animals. They learn to hold themselves" (Lefebvre 1992, 48) through rhythms both linear and cyclical. Compelling humans to attend to their own bodies while also demanding attention from their dogs, the dance was loaded with information that sometimes stuck with its intended meaning and purpose while other times slipping up, floating away, and disappearing as the dogs' names left human lips. But the rhythm that Moira emphasised was that of repetition: "Don't get frustrated", Moira told Opal's human, who was visibly stressed that Opal wasn't getting the dance right. She was distracted and distressed by the other dogs and decided that she should bark instead of participating in the training. For this pup, Moira put up a makeshift barrier to obstruct her view, and it helped. Once Lucy and Susie were out of sight, they were out of mind. The treats that her human was holding suddenly became much more interesting than the dogs that she could no longer see. After trying to take a peek beyond the barrier a few times, she took the invitation to dance, and the steps started falling into their right place. Although Opal lacked the boisterous energy that Lucy had, she started glancing at her human when called. "Keep practicing! Good job, dad!" Moira encouraged Opal's 'dad' before moving on to help Susie.

Susie wasn't so much struggling as she was happily oblivious, ignoring her human's invitation to dance altogether. With her belly on the floor and her tail swishing slowly, she was clearly content where she was, and she wasn't about to get up unless something truly exhilarating happened. "Get

that excitement on your face”, Moira advised. “Get their neurons buzzing!” The elderly woman cleared her throat, put on a beaming smile, and called her dog, ‘Susie!’ with a dramatically elevated pitch and *accelerando*, speeding up the tempo for the indolent Susie. Like magic, Susie’s attention shifted, and she gazed up at the woman, lifting her head off the floor. The woman’s partner cheered from his spectator’s seat with a pride as Susie started picking up the choreography with a newfound curiosity and concentration.

In many ways, the training class followed the pattern of a typical dance class: when dogs and their humans first started learning the new choreography, they fumbled. They missed some steps; they forgot the next move; they tried to make things up as they went. But as they practised under Moira’s tutelage, the choreography became a part of their bodies — it became habituated and in turn, *made* their bodies anew. The movements gradually became less clunky, especially as Moira’s suggestions helped the dogs and humans communicate better about the bodies and their corporeal language of one another. Moira’s position as a *dog* trainer almost seemed like a misnomer, as her work seemed to be more about teaching *humans* how to dance with their dogs in ways that work best for their specific coupling by providing her insights about each dog and each human as well as a real-time multispecies translation for both dogs and humans what was working and what was not, and why that might be. Each step was produced and coached through a bespoke process designed for particular bodies, both canine and human, ultimately to build up to a dance in which dogs and their humans moved their bodies in a tightly choreographed dance of call and response that was by no means as simple as it seemed. Doing the dance of training was thus a highly emotional experience, inevitably. Excitement, delight, pride, frustration, impatience, desperation, and anxiety were just some of the forces that flowed, meshed, and bounced in the atmosphere.

When the class came to an end at 11:30 a.m., so did the dance. The human dancers and spectators thanked Moira. “Keep practicing”, Moira encouraged them as they left one by one, looking lovingly at the pups who were exhausted from a hard hour’s work and looked ready for a nap. I smiled and waved goodbye to them as I sat in the corner of the room, scribbling in my fieldwork notebook, gently patting the pups who passed by me. But even after everyone from the puppy class had left,

Moira continued her dance tirelessly as she prepared to welcome the next class of adult dogs who were to be taught a whole new choreography.

rondo: circle of life

Rondo, the final movement of the symphony, is characterised by its cyclical form. In a symphony, it often takes the form of A-B-A-C-A-B-A (but not always), wherein each letter represents a distinct strain of music. This last movement explores the cyclical ways in which dogs and their humans shape one another's temporality, especially in the formation of routines (which often seemed to revolve around the dog) and in one of the most popular games that dogs and humans play together: fetch.

cyclical routines

Dog people I met were always ready and able to describe their — and their dogs' — schedules, which the dogs themselves helped shape with their wants and needs. When I asked Nadine what her and her cocker spaniel Shelly's schedule was like during our virtual interview in late March 2020, three days into the strict nationwide lockdown, she first told me her pre-lockdown schedule, which made its cycle weekly. "My boyfriend and I both worked from home [even before the lockdown], but not all the time. So, I did one day one week, two days the following, and we'd switch. And Shelly was in day care two days a week. We also had a dog walker once a week, so that she got plenty of socialisation with other dogs and people", she said, softly stroking Shelly who was deep in sleep next to her on the sofa. This weekly schedule formed a *rondo*, each day a different refrain: consider refrains A the days when Nadine or her boyfriend stayed home with Shelly; refrains B the two days in the week when Shelly went to her day care; and refrain C the one day a week that the dog walker came. Depending on the week, the orders of the refrains varied, but it always alternated between the disparate refrains in a rondo-esque cycle, giving Nadine, her boyfriend, and Shelly a dynamic yet recurrent rhythm that worked well for everyone on a weekly basis.

However, because of the lockdown, their schedules — as well as their bodily actions involved in carrying out the activities in the schedules — had changed. She told me that both she and her boyfriend were working from home full-time now, but that Shelly's day care was still operating. "It's almost like, a delivery service for day care. There's no contact, and they're wearing all the gloves and stuff. And the whole knocking and standing back, contactless drop-off, stuff like that", she described. I nodded, realising how weird it felt to already have this relatively new phenomenon of 'contactlessness' so familiarised in our bodily habits that what she described resonated with me immediately. "It's good she still gets to go to day care", Nadine added. "She loves other dogs and people. She just loves everyone and everything. So I was worried she would wonder why she can't say hi to all these people and dogs when we're out walking, because we're keeping away from other people and dogs", she looked at Shelly affectionately, but at the same time, almost ruefully.

I watched this delicate moment between Nadine and Shelly through the screen of my laptop, in my living room. Contactlessness also applied to my fieldwork, as I could no longer meet my participants in person, cuddle with the dogs, share treats, or let Frank make new friends. I looked at Frank the same way that Nadine looked at Shelly, giving him few pats on the head as he sighed, finally slumping next to me on the couch after barking at the door a few times. Our rondo had changed as well with the lockdown, though I had to admit that Nadine and Shelly seemed to have prepared and practised theirs much better as she laid out her new routine: "So now, our routine is, we wake up, and the first thing in the morning at around 6 a.m., we take her out for a good hour and a half. She'd then eat her breakfast and sleep until lunchtime. She wakes up every now and again, wag her tail, get her pats, and go back to lie down. And then at lunch time, we give her a frozen Kong or whatever,⁷ and that keeps her going for an hour and a bit, and she goes back to sleep until we're finished working", Nadine recounted. This new daily routine operated on a different cyclical arrangement, one that was shaped by the rules and limitations that were suddenly imposed on bodily locations and proximities by the lockdown. It matters, then, as Stewart (2008) argued, that things — like routines and schedules — could throw themselves together and snap into place with alertness

⁷ A Kong is a type of toy that is often used to stuff not-completely-solid treats (such as peanut butter or yogurt) into. It often takes a dog a while to lick out all the treats through the hole, so dog people usually use it to keep a dog occupied for a prolonged period of time. Of course, freezing the Kong prolongs this time even further.

that signalled “the sense of being *in* something — something grand, something degraded, something dumb” (81), or something so complex — like a pandemic.

However, while these new routines were often framed as a challenging adjustment for many humans, they proved to be quite the time for dogs. To quote Brooke, a dog behaviourist I interviewed, a lot of dogs were now thinking “wow, life is finally predictable! I have access to what I need! I can ask to go out any time of day instead of being stuck waiting for the dog walker — I can actually go and ask!” In a way, then, the lockdown had inverse effects on dogs: while humans learned to live with limited choices of what they were allowed to do, dogs now enjoyed a wider range of choices with their humans by their sides most of the time now. This meant that dogs had more of a say in what the refrains were going to play out like, and also in which order they would be played.

Indeed, Shelly has been catered to during the lockdown, as Nadine and her boyfriend worked to meet her needs and wants within the parameters of the lockdown: “she’ll come up and wag her tail and stuff, like ‘oh, can you give me a cuddle?’”, Nadine said. “Sometimes at lunch, we’ll play with her if we’re not on calls. Then in the evening, we’ll play games in the house. We’re always training with her, and we always have treat toys and stuff,⁸ especially now that there’s no option to go outside in the evening with her again”. This new routine was a daily cycle packed full of different activities that revolved around the dog, ranging from long early morning walks, breakfast time, playing, training, providing her with treats and toys to make up for the decrease in outdoor time.

Each of these activities came with an affective charge of its own, as bodily ecologies affected us and compelled us to affect in turn. Then, changing routines — that is, having to adapt to a new, different, pandemic *rondo* — wasn’t just a logistical issue that could be solved with administrative effort. Instead, it was also an affective one that evoked a whole array and mixture of senses (such as relief for the day care’s remaining open, guilt and disappointment for not being able to go outside as much, and the need and desire to offset the guilt and disappointment with other modes of care) that

⁸ Treat toys refer to any toys that dispense treats in different ways. A Kong is an example of a treat toy.

could only be addressed with new melodies and rhythms, which were born from attending to one another, creating continued harmonies in their symphonic kinship.

a cyclical game of fetch

Some of the activities within the daily cycle were also cyclical in themselves. For example, fetch, a popular game for many dogs and their humans, was an archetypal *rondo*, as it is a repetitive game of throwing and fetching. Anouk and her rescue terrier Frisky demonstrated this for me when we went on a walk to Holyrood Park together after our interview at their flat on a cold morning in January 2020.

Walking from Leith to Holyrood Park, Frisky was calm, occasionally sniffing things here and there to pee. On the spots where Frisky peed, Frank repeated the process, making sure to leave his scent behind as well. But things changed when Anouk pulled out Frisky's ball as well as the ball launcher, a simple tool shaped like an ice cream scoop with a long, flexible plastic handle that allows humans to fling the ball without having to touch the ball or bend down to pick it up. Frisky's eyes lit up as they followed the ball with incredible reflex, and he started hopping around with energy that just wasn't there during the interview or the walk over to the park. He was ready for the rondo.

As Anouk lifted her arm with the ball launcher in her hand, and Frisky was on a mission with just one goal: get that ball. Once the ball was launched, he ran after it immediately, chasing the ball and its every bounce, in every direction it went. Then he brought the ball back, sometimes right away, and sometimes taking his time. And when he dropped the ball at Anouk's feet, she used the ball launcher to pick up the ball and threw it again for Frisky whose eyes never left the ball. Panting and running, Frisky was focused and determined.

Throughout the game, Anouk and Frisky created three distinct refrains. In refrain A, Anouk threw the ball, making a big swooshing sound with the ball launcher rapidly travelling through the air and flinging the ball in a projectile. Frisky immediately chased after it with fervour, bringing it back,

usually taking the most direct route back to Anouk. The circuit completed again and again as the ball, the dog, and the human moved repetitively through the same actions. In refrain B, Anouk launched the ball the same way, but instead of bringing it back to her, Frisky took his time happily wandering with the ball before bringing it back to me instead. Anouk and I laughed at Frisky's 'disloyalty', but I couldn't decline his proposition when he dropped the ball in front of me, looked at me, then at the ball, then at me again expectantly. I briefly participated in the game of fetch with Frisky for a while as Frank roamed around the park, sniffing to his heart's content, with no interest at all in what I was doing with Frisky or the ball. And in refrain C, Anouk *didn't* throw the ball. Instead, she held it up as something for Frisky to focus on while she snapped a few photos of him. The circuits These refrains took turns, going in a somewhat chaotically ordered cycle that ultimately came back to end with the last run-through of refrain A before Anouk decided it was time to wrap up the movement to go meet up with her husband and daughter for the evening. Frisky seemed a bit disappointed when Anouk put the ball and the launcher away in her backpack, but obliged, marking the end of the movement.



fig. 36 – refrains B and C

The implications of this experiment of imagining our canine-human ecologies as creative, artistic, and musical phenomena are vital not only in understanding, but also *experiencing* multispecies kinship. Our corporeal engagements and their affective consequences that stem from the embodied creativity and musicality in our multispecies interactions brim with moments that happen through seemingly routine and mundane activities — like feeding, grooming, hanging out at a café or on a friend’s couch, chatting, walking, training, playing fetch, just going about one’s day. These moments spark something in us, evoking the very ordinary affects that make our multispecies kinship extraordinary. As Stewart (2008) wrote,

A moment of poesis can be a pleasure or a dragging undertow, a sensibility that snaps into place or a profound disorientation. It can endure or it can jump into something new. It can sag, defeated, or harden into little mythic kernels. It can be carefully maintained as a prized possession or left to rot. It can morph into a cold, dark edge, or give way to something unexpectedly hopeful. *It’s something that happens* (2008, 77, emphasis added).

Experiencing these moments takes a particular kind of practice: to “be attentive, but not only to the words or pieces of information”; to “listen to the world, and above all to what are disdainfully called noises, which are said without meaning, and to *murmurs* [rumeurs], full of meaning — and ... listen to silences” (Lefebvre 1992, 29). Sharing these commonplace yet exceptional moments with dogs and their humans and getting to be a part of their symphonies were experiences of the enchanting forces that produce the conditions of living together (Barthes 2002). Caught in the fleeting present between what had already taken place and what is to come, then, these were the moments and movements — which encompassed unpredicted messiness and affects that are difficult to pinpoint or explain — that formed some of the many musical notations that constitute the symphonies of multispecies kinship.

Frank

Frank is my dog. Not just because he belongs to me the way that my other treasured things belong to me, but because I also belong to him; he is my dog because I am his human. Perhaps because of this, writing about Frank is a bit of an overwhelming task. I don't really know where to start or where to end, what to focus on and what to omit, because everything I learned about and from him feels so very important to me. But I still feel compelled to write about him, precisely because it's so important.

The things I know about Frank are knotted knowledge accumulated through the rich mundaneness of time, space, and experiences that we share — things I had to really *be there* for with all my senses, things like attending a virtual conference together or sewing a toy that he chewed through. This final and autoethnographic photo essay chapter is all about, and dedicated to, Frank, the inspiration behind all the dog-related things I do, including this doctoral project.



fig. 37 – Frank at home

One of the many things I love about Frank is that he is an incredibly honest dog. From sleepy grumpiness to pure ecstasy, he is incapable of hiding his feelings. The thing that brings out his expressions most readily is food, especially meats, cheeses, and breads (scones, bagels, and croissants

are his favourites). His eyes become twice the normal size, and his nostrils start flaring, pointed right at the food. He gets put under the sensuous spell of it all.



fig. 38 – Frank and his love of food

But he is also a polite and patient boy. Even when faced with mouthwatering foods that look and smell so much better than his kibbles, he never lunges or steals. Instead, he waits. Sometimes from afar, as if the distance helps with his impulse control; sometimes from up close, when the stakes aren't very high and he's just asking for leftover crumbs.



fig. 39 – Frank and his self-control

He also has clear preferences and taste, and it sometimes means that he is honest to a fault. One evening in lockdown, I was standing around in the kitchen, eating some freshly cut cantaloupes with our hands — a Saturday night treat with copious amounts of port to go with it. Frank's curious eyes compelled me to give him a piece. He really likes watermelons, so he must like cantaloupes, too, I thought. I tossed him a piece — ripe, sweet, and perfectly bite-sized — which landed right in front of his nose. Frank gave it a quick sniff, then flinched ever so slightly, and swiftly turned his head in the other direction. He let out a tiny, but audible sigh of exasperation. I laughed at his honesty, honesty that he expresses all the time as our canine companion with whom we feel, think, know, imagine, and become.

I spoke as Frank, ‘I don’t want it. *Thank u, next*¹’. I continued munching on the neatly cubed pieces of cantaloupe and thought about understanding Frank as an agent with his own consciousness and volition, someone who acts according to his likes and dislikes. I watched him as he continued to ignore the piece of cantaloupe that was now looking sad and covered in dog hair on the floor.

Carrying on with the *thank u, next* reference, I wondered out loud if I was the one who taught Frank patience. Maybe it was the port that rapidly worked its way through our bodies, or maybe it really was just that funny of a joke because it had some truth to it, considering how much impulse control training I did with Frank — I will never know for sure. But no matter the reason, I laughed and laughed and laughed in the kitchen for a while with cantaloupe juice running down my fingers and Frank who decided to join me in the kitchen with a wagging tail and the kind of smile that said ‘I don’t know what’s happening but I’m happy to be part of it’. With absolute abandon and no worries for the world that was crumbling around us for just a few minutes, I felt in my flesh the warm and delightful consequences of our kinship, the very thing that made, and continues to make, us who we are.

¹ *thank u, next* is a song by the pop singer Ariana Grande that I listen to regularly. The lyrics goes: “one taught me love, one taught me patience, and one taught me pain. Now I’m so amazing. Say I’ve loved and I’ve lost, but that’s not what I see, so look what I got. Look what you taught me, and for that I say: thank you, next”.

🐾

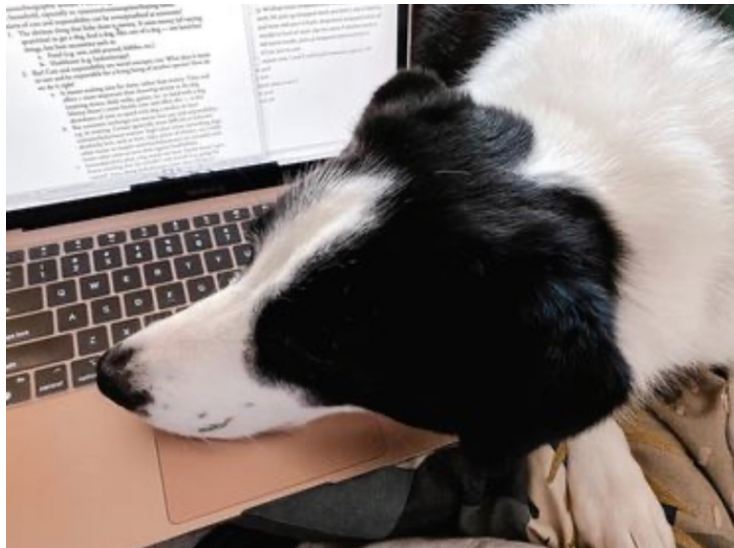


fig. 40 – Frank on my keyboard. Frank often dictates — physically — when I’m allowed to work and when I’m supposed to take a break. When it’s time for a break, he blocks my access to my laptop like this, or with his paw. It works every time because I am a sucker for this dog.

🐾

When I was a little kid, my family members used to scold me, “you have to look ahead of you! Keep your head up and eyes forward when you walk!”. Although my posture has mostly been corrected over the years, their admonishment still rings in my ears as I find myself with my eyes focused on the ground level when I’m on a stroll with Frank. My head is slightly tilted down, purposefully trying to see what Frank sees to the best of my human abilities. In my relatives’ eyes, my ground-level gaze signified lack of confidence and bad posture. But I’ve been more than happy to confidently ignore this haunting advice from my relatives, as I chose to be more dedicated to my kinship with Frank than to my kinship with my extended family members who I haven’t seen in years. And in connecting with other people in Edinburgh who found similar kinds of kinship with their dogs, I started this somewhat shapeless and speculative project — much like a potato-shaped new-born puppy — in 2018 in the name of dog love. But now, I am absorbed in a spell of mixed, and somewhat conflicting, feelings as I write these very words at the end of my dissertation that felt like a never-ending project at many points. The project now stands in front of me as an adolescent dog, having grown up and developed over the past few years to be the series of essays presented in the previous chapters.

This dissertation has been a broad yet specific exploration of what happened when my human participants and I attuned to our dogs in a constant endeavour to maintain our multispecies kinship through imaginative practices even in uncertain and liminal times and spaces, both conceptual and physical. Each chapter aimed to ruminate on and address various questions surrounding multispecies kinship between dogs and (their) humans, topically ranging from epistemologies of dog people to dogs’ role in queering the figure of the child; from the instrumentalisation of multispecies kinship to the ends of violence in a racial crisis to the alleviation of loneliness through more-than-human kinship in a viral crisis; and from the economies to the ecologies of our kinship.

The first chapter, *knowing about dogs*, looked at how dog people developed knowledge of dogs (and more specifically *their* dogs) by making merographic connections among different categories such as

breed, species, and rescue. In this epistemic endeavour, dog people identified and used these categories as a means to understand (their) dogs' behaviours and care needs. Putting Strathern (1992) and Uexküll (2010 [1940]) in conversation, I contended that these partial categories do not add up to a whole, but rather that they are perspectively and infinitely diffracted, in turn highlighting the liminal gaps between the categories. These gaps made the differences between human and canine *umwelten* visible, which allowed for imaginative and speculative work on the humans' part — that is, dog people produced stories based on intersubjective sensibilities to fill in these gaps in their effort to understand (their) dogs despite the different *umwelten* we occupied.

I then suggested speculative intersubjectivity as central to multispecies kinship that stems from the work of making merographic connections and making sense of the gaps that came to the fore from making those connections. Then, aligning with Weaver's argument on sensibility as a form of knowing that makes claims about bodies — not just thoughts — as capable of 'knowing' (2021, 84), I argued that perhaps multispecies kinship could be understood as founded on the sensibility-informed attempt, a care-laden speculation, to inhabit canine subjectivity across our *umwelten*.

The second chapter, *no future for dog children*, depicted a specific way in which many of my human participants related to their dogs despite our different *umwelten*: as parents to their dog children. In illustrating the similarities and differences between human children and dog children, I argued that taking dogs' role as children seriously in multispecies familial contexts queers the normative concept of the child by evading reproductive futurism (Edelman 2004). While the similarities in material, bodily, and linguistic practices worked to solidify dogs' status as children, their temporal differences — the fact that they, more often than not, die before their humans and that they aren't expected to grow up to achieve independence the way most human children are — shifted the future-oriented and normatively reproductive way of thinking about children. This temporal queering effectively challenged the very notions of the child and the future and helping speculate about what kinds of world become possible when children don't have to be human and don't have to represent the future.

This present-focused perspective situated dog children, who share many undeniable similarities to human children, in a strange, liminal place between the queer *jouissance* in the here and now and the affective, linguistic, and material logics that governed normative — reproductive futuristic — conceptions on and practices surrounding childhood and children. Acknowledging the conceptual codependence of ‘queer’ and ‘normative’ (in that ‘queer’ can only exist in resistance to ‘normative’), however, I sat with the tension that arose from the coexistence of dog children’s effortless occupation of the normative role of the child and their queer unsettling of the same role. It was in this liminal space that dog children straddled that we get to imagine a future that involved *nonhuman* children, a space concerned with embodying rather than becoming, and accordingly, a space that helps us re-think and re-orient kinship through our present bodies, especially across the species border. This also tied back to the concept of sensibility with which I ended the first chapter: parenting dog children in a way that foregrounds present *jouissance* is a *sensible* — that is, concerned with embodied knowledge — way of building multispecies kinship that is produced and maintained by taking affective and bodily knowledge seriously.

The following chapter, *managing kinship with more-than-human economies*, inquired about the role of capitalism, feelings, and aesthetics in the mutual domestication between dogs and humans. In order to ‘stay with the trouble’ as Haraway urged (which is to care for the dogs that we are responsible with and to), dog people participated in multiple economies, including capitalism, a system riddled with ethical quandaries. However, I illustrated that these knotted economies included monetary/fiscal economy as well as ethical, aesthetic, and affective economies, and that they worked both in tension and in conjunction with one another in different contexts. In the contexts of medical care as well as foods, treats, and even fashion trends, humans weighed one option against another in terms of monetary costs and their responsibility to and enjoyment with their canine kin and came to embrace some interesting resolves to the tensions and to make the most of the conjunctions.

I argued that the workings and struggles that happen between these economies — negotiations, justifications, navigation — are a part of our continual and mutual domestication, a way for dogs and humans to manage their families, homes, neighbourhoods, and worlds, allowing humans to relate to dogs in the ways afforded to us. I further discussed that perhaps this is part of staying with

the trouble of multispecies kinship: participating in an ethically questionable system (so much so that there's a phrase like 'there is no ethical consumption under capitalism') and finding imaginative ways to stay with the trouble not only of our multispecies kinship but also the economies through which we operate the management thereof.

In the following chapter, *multispecies kinship as a technology of exclusion*, I documented online interactions that took place on Facebook. Built on this relatively brief but impactful encounter, this chapter explored the relationships between dogs, race, and whiteness in a digital space. I showed that love of dogs and white supremacist racism can easily be compatible and argued that this compatibility stemmed from racism as a simultaneously anthropological and zoological matter in which the conceptualisations of the 'human' and the 'animal' are inseparably intertwined. That is, the oppression of racialised humans and that of subjugated nonhuman animals are both forms of white supremacist violence based on arbitrary and connected notions of race and animality that justify violence and cruelty. I contended that whiteness and its ignorance worked to produce and reproduce this dichotomisation of interlinked concepts, which in turn maintained and upheld the dichotomy of white vs. racialised.

In this white ignorant perspective that was predicated on such (imagined) dichotomies, the sentimentality of multispecies kinship was instrumentalised as a technology of exclusion and violence toward racialised/animalised ('bad') humans who were pitted against police ('good') animals. The refusal of the inextricable connection between human and animal, then, played a significant and foundational role in upholding a white supremacist hierarchy, which further normalised a cognitive disposition that was predicated on a racially — and thus zoologically — hierarchical way of organising the world. However, I speculated in the hope that (even) in this seemingly grim organisation where disparate categories created chasms, these chasms may be a generative site where racialised humans and nonhuman animals can perhaps find an opportunity to dismantle the false dichotomy — and, in turn, white normative multispecies kinship — by practicing the kind of multispecies kinship that isn't founded on white supremacist sentimentality that functions through binary fallacies, but instead, on sensibility.

More-than-human kinship against proximal loneliness explored a specific kind of loneliness — one I termed *proximal loneliness* — that came to the fore during the first and the strictest UK-wide lockdown that came into effect in March 2020. Largely autoethnographic, the chapter drew from my experience of loneliness and more-than-human kinship while being in lockdown with Frank, my dog child, in our small flat in Edinburgh. Its starting point was the question ‘what happens when intraspecies interactions among humans are forced apart?’, which came about as a result of the lockdown. I traced the histories behind our kinship to situate the specific kinds of knowledge produced in the chapter, then told three stories that illustrated how our lives and our bodies were being shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addressing the ways in which the viral pandemic contributed to my loneliness in the lockdown, I showed that a specific kind of loneliness emerges from the lack of shared rhythms, routines, and habits — things that only develop in proximity to another.

Engaging with existing scholarship on different kinds of loneliness, including emotional/personal, social, and cultural loneliness, I theorised that life in lockdown highlighted a different kind of loneliness: proximal loneliness. I built on the concept of ‘response-ability’ (Haraway 2012) to argue that multispecies kinship helped to alleviate feelings of proximal loneliness through emergent practices that make us care and respond to one another (also see Abram 1996). I contended that even in these unprecedented and viral times, despite the profound feelings of loneliness for many, multispecies emergent practices — including tremendously mundane and seemingly not-so-active things like sitting next to each other with our bodies touching — continued to exist and grow with shared response-abilities of our kinship across the species boundaries.

The final chapter, *creative ecologies of multispecies kinship*, illustrated the musical, choreographic, and rhythmic ways in which the ecologies — affective and bodily engagements that we are involved in as living beings in a shared environment — of our more-than-human entanglement can be conceptualised. I looked at symbolic and bodily languages as melodies and rhythms and argued that the pitch, the timbre, the vocabulary, and the movements involved in multispecies conversations and communications can create polyphony and polyrhythm, which spark something exciting, spontaneous, and multifarious in our everyday lives — something that attunes us to the moment

filled with affective rhythms and tunes and highlights the present in all its possibilities that dog children, as queering entities, inhabit and pull their human parents into.

I further contended that understanding the ways in which we share our time and space create melodies, harmonies (and cacophonies), and rhythms of everyday life, and that there is value in understanding and experiencing them as moments that throw themselves together, moments that *just happen* somehow, moments that emphasise sensibility necessary to attune to these everyday tunes and movements. The music and dance can be a bit of a mess, as they do not always play out in the same tune or rhythm and are almost always imperfectly performed. But it is in this imperfect symphony that we affect and are affected by one another in a circuit of kinship-building practices within a shared atmosphere.

Lastly, the photo essays that interspersed the textual chapters aimed to provide visual vignettes along with some speculative ethnographic fiction. These essays depicted the kinds of speculative work that takes place in multispecies kinship — the work of imagining beyond our bodies and telling stories about the entanglement of our bodies. In telling these stories, I argued that while these stories are neither grand nor revolutionary, their magic is in their mundaneness. The imagination involved in the mundane was the intricate gossamer threads bridging the gaps between *umwelten* in multispecies kinship. What I presented, then, was a series of short photographic essays about some of my canine participants, providing a glimpse into the affectively charged lives that dogs share with their humans as well as the corners of human consciousness they occupy.

In full acknowledgement of the fact that they are often a weird mixture of fact and fiction, both ethologically informed and also inevitably anthropomorphic, I tried to emphasise the kind of warmth, the glow that always surrounded the dog in these stories. In doing so, I leaned into the intrinsically speculative nature of multispecies ethnography and experimented with storytelling as an ethnographic method. In this way, the photo essay chapters were in part imaginative with the purpose of pushing the boundaries of what ethnography can look like. I hoped to capture some of the intangible-yet-almost-material radiance through the photographs and the accompanying words.

In thinking and writing about the specifics involved in multispecies kinship between dogs and their humans throughout the processes of fieldwork and dissertation writing, two overarching and related themes provided the larger architectural scaffolding on which the chapters were built up, composed, and woven, albeit in a bricolage-esque manner: liminality and speculation/imagination, which often enabled each other. The liminality of dogs as they straddled multiple roles or categories elucidated the operating logics behind our complex kinship with dogs as well as the larger world that exerts its systemic forces on our multispecies kinship.

The ways in which dogs were understood through the lenses of breed, species, and rescue revealed the intersubjective endeavours that make kinship possible between different *umwelten*. The simultaneous queerness and normativity of dogs as children showed the ways in which parts of reproductive futuristic logics were both naturalised and resisted through the dog child. The way dogs were compared and contrasted with Black Lives Matter protesters shed light on the dichotomising logics of whiteness that analogised ‘human’ and the ‘animal’ and ‘white’ and ‘racialised’. Their coinciding bodily familiarity and across-the-species-boundary otherness inspired another way of thinking about loneliness. The multiple economies that dogs wandered between brought to the fore the functioning of kinship under capitalism and how our multispecies kinship endures, and even thrives, as it was managed through these economies. The multispecies attempt to perceive and make sense of these gaps was an artistic endeavour, whether intended or not. Through our everyday bodily interactions in a shared environment, we made an ordered chaos through music and dance, playing with tune and time and existing in the present, *together*.

The liminality, then, is a productive space in which to think about many different — and sometimes unexpected — implications of our kinship. It allowed me, throughout the project, to think more boldly and imaginatively about some curious questions such as ‘what happens when dogs become our children?’, ‘how does whiteness inform the compatibility of dog love and racism?’, ‘what kind of loneliness does multispecies kinship resist?’, ‘what kinds of trouble do we find ourselves staying in because of our kinship in late-stage capitalism?’, and ‘how do dogs help us feel and embody the atmosphere we share with one another through music and dance?’

However, this liminality also revealed something about the larger world that holds these liminal spaces in which dogs reside: the penchant for dichotomous categorisation, stubbornly refusing to take into account the complexities of dogs (let alone our beyond-species kinship that add further complexities that stem from our interspecies interactions) that evade categorisation at every turn. The liminality, then, highlights how imagined and bounded categories create gaps between them — gaps that make merographic thinking possible. This liminality is uncomfortable: suspended in the flux between categorical containers, dogs and their human kin often find themselves in a complex, entangled mess. But one of the most fascinating things that humans do to address this discomfort of liminality is *speculating* about dogs and our relationship with them.

So, *speculation* was the other larger beam that held the chapters together. Committing to speculation meant committing to intersubjectively imagining what the other might be feeling with the full acknowledgement of the fact that we can never actually feel what they feel (due to the differences in our species-specific *umwelten*). And as such, these acts of speculation were *vital* to both dogs and humans involved in multispecies kinship. Not only was speculation a significant part of human production of dog knowledge, but it also allowed dog children to live and thrive in the care of their human parents who constantly speculated about their canine children's needs in the present. Speculating about the kind of loneliness felt during the strictest lockdown led to multispecies kin practices that kept both me and Frank relatively sound even as we crawled out from the grimness of the first lockdown. Misguided speculations linking Black Lives Matter protesters and COVID-19 kept alive a twisted kinship between white supremacists and police animals, showing that multispecies kinship isn't always a relationship of nice cuddles, but also one implicated in the larger systemic and violent inequities. Calculating imaginations that brought together different kinds of economies allowed for emergent care practices that reconciled monetary, affective, aesthetic, and ethical concerns. And lastly, experimental speculation surrounding our everyday lives and actions provided a glimpse into a different way of experiencing the world through our multispecies kinship: as music and dance that make us feel things, ranging from clunky awkwardness to intoxicating joy.

In this way, taking the work of speculation in our kinship seriously offered us the opportunities to care about and for, and even to find joy with the ones around us, even those beyond our human

selves. And this is the note that I want to end this dissertation on. Zooming out slightly from how the elements and fragments of multispecies kinship that I've explored throughout the project were held up thematically with liminality and speculation, I saw how the speculation in the face of liminality that enables our kinship sustained our curiosity about one another. In other words, our kinship made us wonder about — to really see with wonder — one another. Living in the mess that is the world today, I often turned inward to run away and shield myself from the grimness of every news segment, stranger's 'opinions' on people's humanity, and Facebook post I came across. But with Frank, with dogs, I see a small but sparkling glimmer as I find myself drawn to a world of in-betweens, a world founded on wondrous speculations, a world that can bring joy, reminding me at every turn the vital significance of our multispecies kinship in surviving (and if I'm being ambitious, *thriving*) in this world.

12 Rules for What

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