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“That’s when he comes rushing into her life.” Swedish Literary Depictions of Human-Animal Sexual Contact at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century

To introduce an animal to the city is to introduce perversion.
(Despret 211)

Introduction.

“So, what are you working on now?”

“I’m writing an article about a few Swedish literary narratives that I’ve found about people having sex with animals.”

“... oooh, that’s terrible!”

This short dialogue took place between me and a colleague of mine by the coffee machine at our workplace, and it says a lot about today’s societal norms regarding the human-animal relationship.¹ The historical context to this reaction is the social condemnation and severe punishments that, largely as a result of the Christian paradigm of sodomy, always seem to have characterized human-animal sexual contact in the Western part of the world. In Sweden, this tradition has been unusually strong (Liliequist 395–397, 420–423; Rydström, *Sinners* 2). Bestiality was made a capital crime in the provisional laws of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, but it was not until the beginning of the seventeenth century that it began to be brought to trial frequently. In accordance with the laws of 1442, 1608, and 1735, the crime of bestiality was often punished with death, for both the human and the animal, and the peak of these prosecutions was reached in the eighteenth century (Liliequist 393–394).

Due to processes of modernization in the nineteenth century, sodomy gradually came to be considered less grave. When Sweden implemented a new penal code in 1864, bestiality was regulated in the same section as same-sex sexual acts and “unnatural fornication” between a man and a woman, and it was thus punished with up to two years of hard labor. When this penal code was abolished in 1944, it marked the completion of what Jens Rydström defined as a major shift in Swedish society: from a paradigm of rural penetrative sodomy to one of urban masturbatory homosexuality. This process made it impossible to continue to punish non-reproductive sexual acts

between a man and a woman as well as same-sex sexual acts; the latter was instead increasingly medicalized. Since the late 1980s, however, Sweden has shown a steady increase in legal rights and positive attitudes towards same-sex relationships (Rydström, *Sinners* 1–7).

With regards to sexual acts between humans and animals, however, there has been a different discourse since 1944. In the process of modernization during the course of the twentieth century, a large part of the everyday interaction between humans and animals moved from stables and barns in the countryside into urban homes, which were increasingly filled with pets (Thomas 242–287). Simultaneously, the abolition of the penal code regulating sexual acts with animals meant that such practices disappeared from both the medical and the legislative discourse (Bolliger & Goetschel 27–28; Rydström, *Sinners* 7). Instead, they came to be conceptualized as a rare form of animal abuse, and were therefore regulated under versions of animal welfare acts in different countries, including Sweden. However, these laws could generally only be called upon if it could be proven that the animal had been subjected to violence or force (27–45). Regardless of the fact that human-animal sexual activities were thus largely unregulated from the mid-twentieth century onwards, there remained a very strong social taboo; these two interacting circumstances shed light on the large scale production of animal pornography that took place from the 1960s onwards (Grebowicz; Kulick). Indeed, the common use of animals in the sex industry, including photography, film, and even brothels, has been put forward as one reason why sex with animals was re-criminalized in many European countries and US states at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Garrard, *Bestial* 211–212). Another reason is personal safety: the documentary *Zoo* (2007), about a man being killed after being penetrated by a stallion, stirred much controversy in the US (Bakke n7; Despret 203–211). Sweden followed the general development in the West in this regard and re-criminalized sexual acts with animals in 2014 (Garrard, *Bestial* 211–212).

Against this historical background it is not difficult to understand what instigated my colleague's outcry. Perhaps she would have reacted differently had she been familiar with the fact that there is a cross-cultural continuum of stories that depict human-animal sexual encounters, a sort of thematic genre that Greg Garrard refers to as "zoophilic narratives" or "zoophilic fictions" (*Bestial*). Moreover, there have been several attempts made in recent decades to challenge the rigid concept of bestiality by proposing other ways of understanding human-animal intimacy, attraction, and sex. One of these attempts is the introduction of the terms "zoosexuality" and "zoophilia," which, ever since they were coined by Hani Miletski in the 1980s, have been in use as a

signifier for sexual orientation towards animals (Bakke 224). Another challenge was formulated by Peter Singer, who, in his essay “Heavy Petting,” points out the overlaps between a human’s sexual functions and those of other large mammals. In this discussion, Singer highlights not only bodily similarities but also aspects of lust, pleasure, and reciprocity. This contradicted the scientific paradigm, according to which animal sexuality is solely about reproduction and instincts (Bakke 221; see also Balcombe). Singer’s line of argument instigated a scholarly debate about the lingering influence of sexual morals in discussions regarding the human-animal relationship.

Other challenges to the bestiality paradigm are inspired by queer theory, which, in the field of human-animal studies during the past decade, has meant an increasing deconstruction of this anthropocentric discourse in lieu of a focus on a wider spectrum of norms regarding intimacy, cohabitation, co-living, pleasure, and emotionality (Dell’Aversano; McHugh, *Queer*; Rudy). As Vinciane Despret formulates it: “One must [...] learn to speak about sexuality in terms of bodies and desires and, above all, resist the temptation to consider sex with animals only in the interpretive categories of human discourse” (205). According to Despret, the complexity of this topic goes beyond simple solutions and final answers and, ultimately, comes to form a lesson to be learned.

How, then, do these historical and theoretical backgrounds relate to the above-mentioned narratives about “people having sex with animals,” my mention of which instigated this discussion in the first place? More specifically, these three literary texts that I have found contain explicit descriptions of human-animal sexual contact, and were published in Sweden at the turn of the twenty-first century. Paradoxically, within the framework of the discussion above, the number of texts comes across as both surprisingly low and surprisingly high.

It is surprisingly low since, as Midas Dekkers claims, regardless of legislative or social status, cultural representations of human-animal sexual acts, love, intimacy, tenderness, and emotionality have been ever-present since ancient times in different forms all over the globe (see also Miletski, *History*). Moreover, as Jonas Liliequist notes, in the Scandinavian region, representations of human-animal sex goes all the way back to the Bronze Age (393, 398–400). Finally, Jens Rydström has shown that bestiality is a topic in the works of both Swedish turn of the twentieth century author August Strindberg (Rydström, “Sodomitical”), and twentieth century author Ivar Lo-Johansson (Rydström, *Sinners* 76–77). Thus, there seems to be a Swedish tradition of representing human-animal sexual acts that has continued well into modern times.

The fact that I have nevertheless found only three texts can, however, be seen as significant in terms of the massive cultural silence regarding human-animal sexual contact in today's society. Indeed, it is peculiar that despite all the things humans are willing to do to animals — slaughter them, eat them, flay them, castrate them, tie them down, lock them up, experiment on them — human-animal sex is still so taboo it is barely possible to speak about it in Western societies (Dell'Aversano; Despret 203–211; Rudy 601–602). Against this background, the number of texts that I have found almost stands out as surprisingly high, and might be explained as an influence by the previously referred to strong tradition of bestiality in Sweden in historical times.

The historical and theoretical contexts outlined above are complex, and there are thus many ways in which human-animal sexual contact can be described. At the time of the publication of all three narratives that I will discuss — in 1984, 2003 and 2004, respectively — cross-species sexual acts were not illegal as long as the animal involved was not being harmed; still, such acts were subjected to strong social taboos. How do the literary texts navigate within these fields of tension? What contributions are made to the understanding of the turn of the twenty-first century relationship between the human-animal divide and norms regarding gender and sexuality in Sweden specifically, and in the Western context more generally?

Elsie Johansson, *The Woman Who Met a Dog* (1984).² Elsie Johansson did not have her literary debut until she was 48 years old, when she published her first collection of poetry. Since then, she has been very productive and won numerous awards, in particular for her literary depictions of elderly women's sexuality. This was the focus even of her first published novel, *The Woman Who Met a Dog*, in which the main character is Vera: a single, very tidy and prudish woman in her late 50s, who works in an office. Through retrospection we learn that Vera's life has been characterized by an inhibited upbringing hostile to all aspects of sexuality. Thus, Vera has never had any intimate relationships, neither physical nor emotional. Her quiet life takes an unexpected turn, however, when she meets a large dog of unclear breed, Mister Mac (Makken). Their first meeting takes place when Vera is sitting down for a brief rest on a bench during an early morning walk, and it is depicted along the lines of a heterosexual love story:

That's when he comes rushing into her life.
Over the little bridge he comes, snorting, as compact as a locomotive. The
muscles are vibrating visibly under his skin. He sets out straight towards

Vera, but makes a break so abrupt that his rear end continues to move and bumps into the bench and then he sits down right in front of her knees. He shivers with enthusiasm, the month is open, she sees his pink tongue between white fangs. The ears are standing up.

Yes. He is a dog. Nothing else. (Johansson 39)³

Over the course of a few weeks, Vera becomes acquainted with Makken and his owners, a young couple for whom, as they decide to go away on a weekend cruise, Vera offers to dog-sit. Thus, Makken comes to stay with Vera for a few days in her very clean and well-organized apartment. As they spend time together, just the two of them, Vera becomes strongly affected by Makken's directness and attachment towards her. Gradually, however, her emotions slide into an admiration of Makken's beautiful, strong, and muscular body, which she thoroughly enjoys when one night he jumps up into her bed and crawls into her lap:

She pressures him towards her. She hugs him hard, she glides her lips over his ears, they are like the softest pads of the finest silk. [...] He sighs with pleasure. He is warm against her stomach through the thin nightgown. [...]

Now she rocks her body sideways, her head hangs, saliva flows and fills her month and she has a tingling sensation in her teeth. Her hand slides backwards. She feels the rougher hair on his stump of a tail, the muscles on his hind leg and the warm cavity between the belly and the thigh. On the inside the skin is hairless and very, very smooth. There are hot streams running through her groin. He spreads a little and the right hand grasps his testicles, the fingers spread, stretch and contract, the palm of the hand massages with gentle movements. Deep in her womb there is a pecking nest. A swollenness. An ache.

Then the broadaxe falls.

[...]

Dear Lord in heaven! What am I up to? What am I doing? (Johansson 64–65)⁴

After this event, everything changes. Vera starts a rigid fasting cure, and to Makken she only gives such food as she knows he does not like, and throws away his good food. She also takes away his water bowl, and only lets him drink from dirty puddles in the

street. Moreover, in a horribly dense scene, she beats him with his leash. After a few days Makken's owners come back to collect him and she never sees him again, but her punishment of herself is far from over. Gradually she slides deeper into what could perhaps be seen as a sort of ontological crisis, manifested in her self-denial of food, water, and company. Signed off sick from work and locked up in her apartment, Vera eventually starves herself to death. The only clue as to what has happened is found by her sister as she cleans out Vera's flat after her death, when she is puzzled to find bowls of water and dog food on the kitchen floor.

In relation to the history of human-animal relations, the course of events in *The Woman Who Met a Dog* can be seen as a manifestation of what Laura Brown has called the "threat of interspecies intimacy engineered by the rise of modern pet-keeping" (65). Even in the eighteenth century, Carl von Linné issued a warning about the feelings that might arise as noble ladies let their lap dogs into their beds (Thorman 16–18). These premonitions can be understood in conjunction with Monika Bakke's definition of pleasure as an overwhelming force constantly on the verge of escaping its controlling cultural framework (Bakke 222), and also with conceptualizations of the pet as a liminal creature with the ability to overturn cultural categories (Fox 526–528; Fudge 19). The destructive consequences that might follow for the human upon experiencing pleasure with a body not recognized as a legitimate object of desire are commented upon by Bakke: "Erotic bliss as the tabooed aspect of human-animal pleasure [...] is noncultural, unspeakable, and potentially even lethal to the anthropocentric Subject" (222). This quote is very apt when describing the destructive path Vera takes after her brief and, indeed, rather innocent moment of bliss with a beloved dog.

Another interesting aspect of *The Woman Who Met a Dog* is that Vera's character fits neatly within the stereotype that the person (often a woman) engaging sexually and romantically with an animal is a social loner who turns to animals as a substitute for functioning human relationships (Bakke 227; Fudge 20; Garber 122–124). During the course of the twentieth century, the cultural figure of the lonely misfit has, however, also been subjected to suspicions of homosexuality, and just as cross-species and same-sex sexual contact were regulated under the same penal code, they are intertwined topics in the literature of this time (Kuzniar 206; McHugh, *Animal* 115–162). Indeed, I have previously found that even in late nineteenth century Swedish literature written by August Strindberg there are reoccurring suspicions that women who live alone with their dogs instead of a husband and children might be feminists, or lesbians (Lönngren, *Following* 45–55).

The increasing visibility and rights of the gay community in the Western part of the world, together with the gradual disappearance of the conceptualization of bestiality as a distinct crime, has often resulted in an understanding of depictions of close relationships between humans and dogs on a metaphorical level as “really” being about homosexuality (Kuzniar 206–209; Lundblad 49–74). Such a metaphorical reading of *The Woman Who Met a Dog* would, however, mean losing sight of that which Alice Kuzniar has called “the socially dissonant and daring love of dogs” (224), which is vividly described in the novel. According to this line of thought, it would certainly be possible to understand Vera not as a closet lesbian, but rather as a “zoosexual” (Bakke 224), in that her sexual orientation seems to be directed primarily towards animals (or to one particular animal: Makken). As such, she is surely unique in Swedish literature. While both Kuzniar and Rudy acknowledge the subversive potential of choosing an animal companion instead of a human partner, however, Vera’s strong awareness of and subjection to the social taboos of her time apparently makes such an embrace impossible for her.

Gabriella Håkansson, “Age of Transition” (2003).⁵ Gabriella Håkansson is a highly acclaimed novelist, as well as an essayist and a literary critic. The text that I take an interest in here is one of her few published short stories, written specifically to be included in *Perversions*, a collection of short stories. This collection consists of twelve narratives written by Swedish authors on the book’s titular theme, but Håkansson is unique in her focus on the pet.

“Age of Transition” centers on the relationship between a beloved kitten, Ducie, and her owner Birgitta, who is a middle aged, single woman. Even as she picks her up from the home in which she was bred, Birgitta experiences strong feelings for Ducie, and in their first year together they grow so close that Birgitta’s friends feel ignored and tell her that she spends too much time with the cat. But Birgitta doesn’t care; she likes to think of herself and Ducie as “an old inseparable couple (85).⁶ When Ducie is about to go into heat for the first time, however, the story takes a horror-like turn, in which the cat’s erratic and nervous behaviors are described through Birgitta’s eyes. So also are the cat’s bodily changes, which Birgitta thoroughly inspects:⁷

She had noticed how there in the center of the bottom was a small, small woolly bulge. Now she could clearly see that the little bump had grown, and that by looking closely one could see a pair of black fussy labia and a darker moist crack between them, a crack which in ridiculous ways was

reminiscent of a female sex, but in miniature. “So she is going into puberty,” Birgitta thought. (92)

The veterinarian advises Birgitta to start giving Ducie contraceptive pills, and to consider a hysterectomy in due time. But Birgitta is hesitant — is it really fair to deprive Ducie of all the pleasures of sex? While she ponders this question Ducie grows more restless, loses appetite and weight, and screams in agony day and night, keeping Birgitta awake too. After both have endured a few days of insomnia, the cat repeatedly starts to rest its head on the floor, curve its back inwards, and raise its abdomen towards Birgitta, thereby exposing its “hair-coated little black crack. Birgitta could clearly see that it had swelled up, and when she held the cat in her arms she felt the sex warmly pounding, leaving a thin trace of slime on her bare arm” (96).⁸ Perhaps there could be some way to help her, Birgitta thinks, experiencing heatwaves rush through her body while contemplating it. She hesitates, however, until the cat gives an unusually long, agonizing scream and gazes pleadingly into Birgitta’s eyes, then turns around and arches before her. Birgitta stretches out her hand.

With the outermost tip of her finger she touched the cat’s sex. It was wetter than she had expected and altogether soft, like the nose or the inside of the ear, and before she had the time to think the tip slid into the dark interior. The pulse increased at a breath-taking pace and small black dots were dancing before her eyes. It was warm and narrow in there, and Birgitta perceived pulsating movements, a kind of mild convulsion that seemed to come from the animal’s pelvis, or was it perhaps the pressure from her own, heavy heartbeats that she felt there in her outermost fingertip?

The cat had suddenly gone silent. Slowly, very slowly, she pushed her finger a little deeper into the crack. [...] Birgitta’s face felt like melted lava. There were long, extended heatwaves that found their ways out into the arms and down into her fingers. With each wave she felt how the finger slid further into the animal’s flesh. The relief of not having to listen to the agonized mewling was incredible. Slowly the blood sank away from the face, the pulse calmed down and the heat that had covered her body like a burning blanket cooled down. [...] Now it [the cat] lay completely still, and Birgitta’s finger had sunk unnoticed all the way in down to the root. How peculiar it looked: the white, wrinkled woman’s hand that stuck out from the animal’s hairy body, like some weird, meaty outgrowth.

For a moment they were both completely still, cat and human, joined in this repulsive act of reciprocal desperation. (97)⁹

The spell breaks. As Birgitta withdraws her finger and sees that it is covered with blood and slime she rushes into the bathroom and throws up in the toilet. The cat remains lying on the sofa, watching her with dizzy eyes. During the next 48 hours, Birgitta tends to Ducie who screams with pain, bleeds and smells of “rotten sex” (99),¹⁰ and who finally gives up her breath entirely. In the final scene, Birgitta pressures the cat’s cold and stiff body against her own: “‘My love,’ she whispered into the woolly ear. ‘My little love’” (100).¹¹

In comparing “Age of Transition” with *The Woman Who Met a Dog*, the two stories display both similarities and differences. The main characters are obviously very similar with regards to their age, status, and social life, and can thus be seen as manifestations of the cultural suspicion of the urban woman who lives alone with no husband or children (Holmberg 97–116). Moreover, both stories re-invoke the bodily similarities between different mammals that Singer pointed out in 2001 as being significant for an understanding of human-animal sexual contact. In Vera’s case, the desire is clearly bound up with what she sees as similarities between Makken and a muscular, male body — a literary design that is perfectly in line with age-old perceptions of the dog as a “manly” animal, connected to hunting and guarding (Broberg 339–359). Birgitta’s desire is also based on bodily similarities, but this time focused on the likenesses between herself and Ducie — a description which is part of a cultural tradition according to which the cat is connected to femininity and the domestic sphere (Broberg 339–359).

However, Håkansson’s story does not subject itself to metaphorical interpretations as “really” being about same-sex relationships as easily as *The Woman Who Met a Dog* does; a circumstance that is partly due to the fact that there is no such literary tradition to rely on, and partly due to Ducie’s metonymic character of “actual animal” (Baker 77–81; Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 140; Lönngren, “Metaphor”). “Age of Transition” stands out in its harsh criticism of a suffocating and intrusive pet discourse characterized by power, violence, and a selfish love on the part of a human being who just cannot see the pet as anything else than an extension of the human (see Tuan; Redmalm). Indeed, similarities are not only an element of human desire for animals, but also a crucial aspect of the pet discourse (Brown 8–9). In “Age of Transition” there is a vivid display of the destructive outcome of an intertwining of the two. In this story, the similarities between human and

animal bodies ultimately stand out as deceptive, as they in fact make much more fundamental differences invisible, which make human-animal sexual contact lethal.

As we have seen in both stories, human-animal sexual contact, although initiated by lust and love, lead to violence, suffering, and death. Ultimately, it almost seems as if Vera's acute awareness of the social norms of her time is what gets Makken out of the situation after having "only" been temporarily starved and beaten. Likewise, it is Birgitta's disregard of these norms that makes it possible for her to go deeper and deeper into symbiotic living with Ducie, with death as the ultimate outcome. Thus, both stories are clearly in line with current discourses according to which human-animal sexual contact might potentially be lethal and are seen as being related to maltreatment and abuse (Bakke 226). These stories are also of interest in relation to the pre-modern death penalty against bestiality — a penalty which, as stated earlier, was often executed on both human and animal — since, in the end, someone dies in both of them. Ultimately, this is what makes it possible to formulate one last, fundamental similarity between *The Woman Who Met a Dog* and "Age of Transition," namely that the punishment for breaking the taboo of a human-animal sexual contact is still death.

Lars Jakobson, "Co-livestock" (2004).¹² With a large number of publications written over the course of more than thirty years, ranging from essays to short stories and novels, Lars Jakobson is one of Sweden's most highly esteemed and decorated science fiction authors. He likes to take an element of reality and change it in such a way that what is presumed to be "natural" and "true" comes across as a mere construct, a silent agreement generated by historical and political circumstances.

This is his strategy in "Co-livestock," which starts with the outburst: "My wife is a bloody cow."¹³ It continues with complaints about the narrator's lazy, passive, and silent wife to the extent that the reader eventually realizes that this statement should not just be seen as a figure of speech, but that his wife is in fact a cow. Gradually, a world is presented in which *Homo sapiens* as a species is decentered, and in which cows and horses, for example, are just different kinds of people. Thus, there are all sorts of animals living in both the countryside and the city, in barns, pens, flats, and houses, sometimes with humans, sometimes by themselves; some of them are even given human jobs.

Paradoxically, societal norms and infrastructure are still adjusted in favor of Man, which makes the animals living in the city a constant source of irritation — they do not clothe their children properly, never pick up the phone, defecate on the staircase, etc. —

yet their place in this parallel universe is never questioned. This scenario certainly opens up the possibility of reading the story metaphorically or analogically as a depiction about prejudices regarding certain social groups, such as “the poor” or “the immigrants,” as being sloppy, incapable, and unhygienic. Although such a reading would certainly be culturally relevant, it would mean abandoning the story’s explicit meaning along with the knowledge this might generate regarding the human-animal relationship (see Armstrong; McHugh, *Animal*).

If taken literally, despite the story’s science fiction-like qualities, it gains relevance against the background of a Swedish history of human-animal sex. This context is re-invoked as the narrator remembers how he met his wife and they had their first erotic encounter, which happened during a visit to a farm:

I don’t remember us talking much, her and me, it was probably me who did most of the talking, as usual, and I had also been drinking, but as it turned out I was the one leading her home. We were alone in the pen and I searched long and hard for something to stand on. I think that I found her awkwardness appealing, it made me tender and protective. She was willing and just as horny as me, but it was I who had to go around with the flashlight and look for a box or a couple of stones. She just waited. Finally I turned over the salt block and rolled it over to her behind.

And afterwards I stood there with my pants around my ankles and with my shirt unbuttoned, laid with my naked chest on her back and tried in vain to embrace her. Eventually I just let my arms hang along her sides, my chest against her warm body, my cheek against her thick fur and she ate.

[...] the next day I came back and she lay down and I could sit in the sun with my back against her belly. (50–51)¹⁴

While images of grazing livestock are part of the general conception of Sweden, the fact that there is a historical reality behind this depiction in “Co-livestock” is evident from investigations that show that cows and heifers were the most commonly involved animals in this country’s sodomy cases, in pre-modern as well as modern times (Liliequist 394; Rydström 70–71). The practice of human-cow sex was also represented in twentieth century Swedish literature, such as in the first part of Vilhelm Moberg’s

(1898–1973) *Emigrant-epos* series (*The Emigrants*, 1949; Eng. 1951). This narrative takes place in the mid-nineteenth century and depicts the large-scale emigration from Sweden to America. One of the characters the reader gets to know is Arvid, a young man who is moving to America to escape the abusive nickname “The Bull at Nybacken,” which was given to him because of rumors that he had once had sex with a cow (for a further discussion of sexuality in this novel, see von Seth). Although the reader never learns if these accusations are true, they certainly come across as being associated with actual contemporary practices in Sweden when read against the historical circumstances mentioned above.

Another Swedish literary representation of human-cow sexual contact is found in the autobiography *Puberty*, written in 1978 by the influential twentieth century author Ivar Lo-Johansson.¹⁵ In his description of growing up on a farm in the 1910s and entering into adolescence, the girls living in the countryside appear difficult to approach. This was not the case with the farm animals, whose smells, accommodating attitudes, and open displays of genitals are described as appealing. But even though Lo-Johansson singled one of the heifers out, which he treated extra well and would sometimes embrace as he “caressed himself,” he could never, despite repeated attempts, make it to the point of actual intercourse (301–303).¹⁶ The obstacle was not only the task of getting up high enough, just as in Jakobson’s story but also — which is a point of difference between these two stories — the inability of making the animal stand still. Indeed, these two difficulties reoccur in Rydström’s major study of court cases concerning the crime of bestiality under the Swedish penal code of 1864–1944 (*Sinners*, 222–229).

A difference between both Moberg’s and Lo-Johansson’s stories, on the one hand, and the scenes depicted by Jakobson in “Co-livestock,” on the other, is the absence of guilt in the latter. Arvid, in Moberg’s *The Emigrants*, leaves Sweden to escape the social condemnation connected to his abusive nickname, while the main character in Lo-Johansson’s book is constantly afraid of being caught in the act of intimacy with the heifer, which, he thinks, might cause him to be sent to a correction institute. In “Co-livestock,” however, the lack of shame naturally follows from the imagined universe in this literary text, where humans and animals are seen as ultimately similar — although from a human point of view — and that consequently there is nothing remarkable about human-animal sex. Indeed, in this story, the human-animal relationship with regards to sex can rather be seen in connection with the thoughts put forward by Lo-Johansson who, in spite of experiencing shame and guilt, nevertheless advances the idea that sexuality is what animals and humans have in common, wherefore it should

be seen as a force that brings different species together (Lo-Johansson 301; Rydström, *Sinners* 77).

This way of reasoning is in line with the thoughts put forward by Singer referred to above. The human-cow relationship in both *Puberty* and “Co-livestock” can thus be seen as instigators of that which Kathy Rudy refers to as another erotic world, beyond the paradigm of bestiality (this should be compared with Donna Haraway’s concept of “otherworlding” in “Otherworldly Conversations” [174–182] and *When Species Meet* [303–304n1]). Still, the world depicted in “Co-livestock” is clearly not a particularly happy one. Although sex does not appear as a problem in human-animal relationships, these liaisons nevertheless leave the humans involved in them as emotionally starved, frustrated, and disappointed. With regard to the animals, the reader never learns their point of view, but, as the narrative makes clear, posing the same cognitive expectations for animals as for humans comes with big risks for the animals’ welfare.

Finally, it is worth highlighting one common aspect of all the sources I have referred to in the discussion about “Co-livestock,” both literary and historical, namely the circumstance that sex with larger farm animals such as cows is clearly an all-male affair. The stereotypical image of a person who has sex with animals — a young male, in the countryside, with a cow instead of the woman he cannot access (Bakke 226; Miletski, *Understanding* 40) — has turned out to be grounded in a historical reality (Liliequist 394; Rydström, *Sinners* 70, 76–77). In “Co-livestock,” the only female person whose cross-species relationship we learn about is involved with a dog, a detail which — in particular in relation to the two other stories discussed in this article — further identifies narratives of sex with farm animals as being part of a male continuum.

One significant aspect of this tradition is homosocial communication and community. According to historical investigations, sex with farm animals was sometimes executed in pairs or in groups, and there are reoccurring stories of information and tips regarding this practice being passed on from older boys to younger ones (Liliequist 410–419; Rydström 73–76, 215–216). This aspect is clear in Lo-Johansson’s depictions in *Puberty*, and in “Co-livestock” there also appears to be a constant male-to-male dialogue about the potentials and difficulties of human-animal sex and co-living. Indeed, this forms a stark contrast with the two narratives discussed earlier in this article, which features lonely, silent women as their main characters.

Conclusion. In two of the literary texts discussed in this article, it is apparent that despite the fact that they were written during a period of time in which sex with animals had long since been de-criminalized in Swedish law, the social condemnation associated with the bestiality paradigm remains very strong. Indeed, in both Johansson's and Håkansson's texts, the death penalty is executed by the human party of the cross-species liaison in ways that almost makes the penalty appear as a natural order of things, an inherent logic in the pet-institution. The third story, Jakobson's, offers constructive points of criticism against this discourse, as it defines the problematic aspects of the modern human-animal relationship as much more thorough than being isolated to the sexual act. Thus, even though no one dies in this story, and even though human-animal sex is completely normalized, it is still not a depiction of a happy multispecies society, either for animals or humans.

Still, it is apparent that these stories do not just reproduce the bestiality paradigm, but rather iterate it, and thus formulate the need for renewed understandings of the discourse of human-animal sexual encounters. In relation to this process, I want to highlight the fact that two of the stories in my material are written by female authors and feature realistic descriptions of isolated female main characters with pets in urban settings, and the third is written by a male author and features the unrealistic world of sociable male characters with farm animals in both rural and urban settings. Indeed, there is a *lack of words* for what the female characters in the first two narratives experience, a void that can only be filled, in the third story, with a humorous play with language's metaphorical and metonymical levels in a story that is so clearly un-realistic that it gets away with anything.

Although the material is very limited in scope, I would still like to advance the idea that this dichotomy can be seen as a visualization of the fact that after the Swedish law against bestiality was abolished in 1944, this practice and taboo were not only reproduced in the pornography industry and in the form of a lingering social condemnation. Rather, they became active players in the construction of the relationship between new/old, now/then, culture/nature, man/woman, Western/non-Western, straight/gay, and, ultimately, between what could and could not exist within the frameworks of the modern society. But for any study that acknowledges the fact that we live in a world of multispecies stories and practices of becoming (Haraway Staying), there is a need for other ways of thinking than the one organized according to such dichotomies. This was formulated by Donna Haraway in 2003:

My multi-species family is not about surrogacy and substitutes; we are trying to live other tropes, other metaplasms. We need other nouns and pronouns for the kin genres of companion species, just as we did (and still do) for the spectrum of genders. (96)

Although the topic of human-animal encounters is multifaceted, contradictory, and largely underexplored (Bakke 225), and it is thus difficult to prove anything for certain, it seems likely that human-animal sexual contact are more common in today's society than is generally believed (Bolliger & Goetschel 26). Also, as Garrard notes, zoophilic sexual relations, be they physical, visual, or literary, are indeed part of the entangled world in which we live — whether we like it or not (*Bestial* 217). In relation to these claims, it is important to recall the fact that what causes the harm in *The Woman Who Met the Dog* is not the sexual encounter itself, but rather the effects of the social condemnation of this act, executed by Vera. Together, these lines of thought points to the need for further verbalization of and investigations into ethical, cultural, legislative, medical, social, and biological aspects of human-animal sexual contact.

Notes

1. In this article, I mostly employ the terms “human” and “animal” as shorthand for the more accurate but longer phrase “human and non-human animals.” In this practice I am inspired by Brown (2).
2. This book has not been translated into English. The translation of the title is mine. Original: *Kvinnan som mötte en hund*.
3. My translation. Original: “Det är då han kommer rusande in i hennes liv. Övergångbron kommer han, kompakt som ett lokomotiv. Musklerna vibrerar synligt under huden. Han styr kurs rakt mot Vera, men gör en inbromsning så tvär att bakkroppen slänger och törnar mot bänken och så sitter han pladask mitt framför hennes knän. Han darrar av iver, munnen står öppen, hon ser hans rosa tunga mellan vita hörntänder. Öronen står upp. Ja. Han är en hund. Ingenting annat.”
4. My translation. Original: “Hon trycker honom intill sig. Hon kramar honom hårt, hon glider med läpparna över hans öron, de är som mjukaste lappar av det finaste silke. [...] Han suckar av välbehag. Han är varm mot hennes mage genom tunna linnet. [...] Nu vaggas hon med kroppen långsamt i sidled, huvudet hänger, ögonen är slutna, saliven rinner till och fyller hennes mun och i tänderna har hon en pirrande känsla. Handen

glider bakåt. Hon känner svansstumpens strävare hår, bakbenets muskler och den varma hålan mellan buk och lår. På insidan är huden hårlös och mycket, mycket len. Det går heta strålar genom hennes ljumskar. Han breddar en aning och högerhanden sluter sig kring hans testiklar, fingrarna glesar, sträcks ut och dras ihop, handflatan masserar med varsamma rörelser.

Djupt i skötet har hon ett pickande rede. En svullenhet. En värk.

Då faller bilan.

[...]

-Herre Gud i himmelen! Vad håller jag på med? Vad är det jag gör?"

5. This has not been translated into English. The translation of the title is mine. Original: "Övergångsålder" in the collection of stories *Perversions: 12 berättelser om avvikelser* [Eng. *Perversions: 12 stories about aberrations*].

6. My translation. Original: "gammalt oskiljaktigt par".

7. My translation. Original: "Hon hade lagt märke till att det mitt på stjärten fanns en liten, liten ullig utbuktning. Nu såg hon tydligt att den lilla bullen hade växt till sig, och att det på nära håll gick att urskilja ett par svartfjuniga blygdläppar och en mörkare fuktig springa emellan dem, en springa som på ett fånigt sätt påminde om ett kvinnligt kön, fast i miniatyr. 'Hon är alltså på väg in i puberteten,' tänkte Birgitta."

8. My translation. Original: "hårbeklädda lilla svarta springa. Birgitta kunde tydligt se att den svullnat upp, och när hon höll katten i famnen kände hon hur könet bultade varmt och lämnade ett tunt spår av slem efter sig på hennes bara arm."

9. My translation. Original: "Med yttersta spetsen av fingertoppen rörde hon vid kattens kön. Det var våtare än hon väntat sig och alldeles mjukt, som nosen, eller insidan av örat, och innan hon hann tänka sig för gled toppen in i det mörka innandömet. Pulsens tilltog i en hisnande takt och små svarta prickar dansade för hennes syn. Därinne var det varmt och trångt, och Birgitta förnam pulserande rörelser, ett slags milda konvulsioner som tycktes härröra från djurets bäcken, eller var det kanske trycket från hennes egna, tunga hjärtslag hon kände där ytterst i fingertoppen?"

Katten hade med ens tystnat. Långsamt, mycket långsamt, tryckte hon fingret lite djupare in i springan. [...] Birgittas ansikte kändes som smält lava. Det hettade i långa utdragna vågor som letade sig ut i armarna och ner i fingrarna. För varje vågsvallning kände hon hur fingret gled allt längre in i djurets kött. Lättnaden över att slippa det plågade jamandet var oerhörd. Blodet sjönk långsamt undan från ansiktet, pulsen

lugnade sig och hettan som täckt hennes kropp likt en brinnande filt svalnade. [...] Nu låg den [katten] helt stilla, och Birgittas finger hade omärkligt sjunkit in ända till roten. Så underligt det såg ut: den vita, rynkiga kvinnohanden som stack ut från djurets håriga kropp, likt någon apart, köttig utväxt.

För ett ögonblick var de båda helt stilla, katt och människa, förenade i denna motbjudande akt av ömsesidig desperation.”

10. My translation. Original: “ruttet kön”.

11. My translation. Original: “‘Hjärtegryn,’ viskade hon i det ludna örat. ‘Mitt lilla hjärtegryn.’”

12. This has not been translated into English. The translation of the title is mine. In Swedish, it consists of a wordplay between “sambo” (“co-living”) and “boskap” (“livestock”), that I have done my best to try to capture in the translation “Co-livestock”. Original “Samboskap” in the collection of short stories *Berättelser om djur och andra* [Eng. *Narratives about animals and others*].

13. My translation. Original: “Min fru är en jävla kossa.”

14. My translation. Original: “Jag minns inte att vi pratade särskilt mycket, hon och jag, som vanligt var det väl jag som pratade mest, och dessutom hade jag druckit, men hur det var så blev det jag som ledde hem henne. Vi var ensamma i hagen och jag letade länge och väl efter någonting att stå på. Jag tror att jag fann hennes tafatthet tilltalande, den gjorde mig öm och beskyddande. Hon var villig och lika kåt som jag, men det var jag som fick gå där med ficklampan och snoka efter en låda eller några stenar. Hon bara väntade. Till sist välte jag kubben med saltet och rullade bort den till hennes bak.

Och efteråt stod jag där med byxorna runt anklarna och med skjortan uppknäppt, låg med mitt nakna bröst på hennes rygg och försökte förgäves omfamna henne. Till slut lät jag bara armarna hänga utmed hennes sidor, bröstet mot hennes varma kropp, kinden mot hennes täta hårrem och hon åt.

[...] dagen därpå kom jag tillbaka och hon lade sig ned och jag kunde sitta i solen med ryggen mot hennes mage.”

15. This has not been translated into English. The translation of the title is mine. Original: *Puberty*.

16. This representation was previously discussed by Rydström (Sinners, 76–77).

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