

Lynch's Animals

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The paper examines the structural meaning of so-called animals, or things and beings that seem to be animals, in David Lynch's movies. The focus lies on tiny and unusual details, and thereby the paper will try to give a general outline of the narrative function of animals in the Lynch cosmos.

“The owls are not what they seem”

First of all, we have to ask ourselves a simple, but tricky question. Why are we interested in animals at all? Nowadays animals are a burning issue in science. A broad and intense discussion takes place about the mystic-religious function and significance of animals and their role in the political zoology and historical anthropology. Those scientific movements discussing animals are labelled “animal studies”, “human animal studies” or “anthrozool-ogy”. They share the aim to dissolve “the implicitness with which the opposition between ‘humans’ and ‘animals’ is being hypostatized” in history and culture.¹

This implicit opposition between humans and animals is an anthropological demarcation. It is obvious that we see every day a clear difference between animals and humans. We do not regard and accept animals as our equals. We may save certain species from extinction or try to improve their living conditions, but we do not grant them rights or self-empowerment. For somebody or something seen as non-human, this behaviour is simply discriminatory. In one of my favourite series, “Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country” the Klingon Chancellor's daughter Azetbur puts it this way: “‘Inalien...’ if you could only hear yourselves. ‘Human rights.’ Why, the very name is racist.”² The question is, how did the implicitness of the opposition between humans and animals emerge?

In ancient philosophy this opposition did not yet exist. (Although, the reference to Aristotle often seems to suggest such a dichotomy.) Animals and humans lived together in varied complex situations. Even in modern times, rather the symmetries than the differences between humans and animals are being emphasized.³ However, at some point, the historical circumstances and the rules for the coexistence of humans and animals changed. Animals

¹ Macho, 1997a, p. 177. Special thanks to Corinna Egdorf and Bernard D. Geoghegan for translation assistance.

² Cf. Mayer, Nicholas: Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country, USA 1991.

³ Cf. Macho, 2007, pp. 24 sq.

have been devaluated and the complex relations and interdependencies of humans and animals dissolved into hierarchies and dichotomies.

The German cultural historian Thomas Macho gave a short and evident explanation to this change. His answer will also lead us to Lynch's animals. According to Thomas Macho, the "paradigm shift from the agrarian to the industrial machines" changed the co-living between animals and humans.⁴ Animals disappeared from the direct human environment. They were replaced by industrial machines and thereby debased. Before, the agricultural machinery consisted in a tight interaction of technique, humans and animals. Humans had to breed, domesticate and control animals to be able to use the agrarian machines. With the industrial revolution this interdependent relationship dissolved. In the course of the 19th century, machines got liberated from the animal, and animals were no longer needed. Instead of the power of animals, fossil fuels were used to drive machines. It seemed that fossil fuels were never-ending energy sources. The machines replaced the animals, therefore one could argue, that machines are seen as the better animals. Thus, to discuss the relation between humans and animals, we always have to take in account the relation between man and machine.

This double-bind between humans and animals on the one side and between man and machine on the other side can be observed in depth in David Lynch's movies. In his films, we can see depraved humans existing in almost inanimate and animal free industrial worlds full of machines. On the one hand, there are almost no animals in his movies, on the other hand, his protagonists tend to have an animalistic behaviour. It seems that there is an extremely revealing connection between the latent animality of man and the expulsion of animals out of the machine populated world. So, what is the narrative function of the rarely seen animals in Lynch's movies?

Already at first glance, one can notice, that David Lynch shows a broad interest in animals, animal-like beings and the animalistic. By showing humans as special or strange animals, Lynch questions the opposition between humans and animals. He challenges the contrasts between humans and animals in two different ways.

On one side, there are a lot of animal-like beings in his movies. Those highly vivid organic forms move, absorb or excrete fluids, bear or die. The animalistic actions of these living forms are intensified or contradicted by a special soundtrack. This sound design is typical in Lynch's movies. You can already see those animal-like beings in Lynch's second movie "The Alphabet" from 1968. Here, the filmmaker works with organic forms, animated by stop-motion, that bear letters. With the depiction of those ambiguous animalistic forms, Lynch scrutinizes the concept of the animalistic and dissolves the border between human and animal as well as the border between man and machine.

On the other side, there are a lot of humans in Lynch's movies, who become so organic or animalistic and brutal, that they lose their integrity, dignity, and self-determination. This transformation is shown for example in the famous initial scene of Lynch's "Wild at Heart", where the protagonist Sailor Ripley (Nicolas Cage) bursts out into animalistic violence, which triggers the whole movie's plot. Another example is the unsettling sex scene in "Blue Velvet", where Jeffrey Beaumont (Kyle MacLachlan) hits Dorothy Vallens (Isabella Rossellini) for the

4 Macho, 2007, p. 27.

first time to become competitive with his opponent Frank Booth (Dennis Hopper). Being totally different characters until then, with every scene of animalistic love their subjectivity blurs more and more. Or to mention one third example: The dissolution of human subjectivity into machine-like animality is also visible in Lynch's short movie "The Grandmother", where the mother shows her love or the father beats the boy: It's hard to bear that we see a human family on screen and not animals in their free game course.

There are a lot more examples for this transformation, from the wolf-like humans on the planet of "Eraserhead" to the dwarfs and giants in "Twin Peaks" or in "Mulholland Drive". In Lynch's movies the animalistic becomes human, the human becomes animalistic, and the animalistic becomes organic. Often, the organic is indistinguishable from the machine: machines are the organs of the industrial world.⁵ However, there are also fascinating chimeras in Lynch's movies, real monsters, who are neither human, nor animal, neither organic form, nor machine. "The owls are not what they seem."—as the giant in "Twin Peaks" tells Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan). Those monsters are neither explainable as symbolic forms nor as a psychological human malfunction.

Those human-animals or animal-humans challenge the opposition between humans and animals. Their mere existence reduces this opposition to absurdity. An example for those fascinating monsters is firstly, the "Elephant-Man" John Merrick (John Hurt) and secondly, the nameless baby from "Eraserhead", which reappears in "Wild at heart" as the murdering Bobby Peru (Willem Dafoe). David Lynch made his only non-surrealistic movie about John Merrick, which shows his great interest in these creatures. And the nameless baby is the very single creature that brought as a 'real' "Alien" 'real' fear and horror into the cinema.⁶

Altogether, the anthropological difference between humans and animals is completely annihilated in David Lynch's movies, so that our search for the meaning of animals in the Lynch cosmos threatens to remain without result. The Lynchian humans do not yet know, that they are animals. Referring to our initial question, we therefore have to ask much more specific, if there is a particular animal inside the human? What kind of animals are we actually talking about? And what is not a political but a narrative animal?

To make a long story short: The wolf, the ant, and even the fox might be political animals, but neither the Lesser Goldfinch nor the millions of other animals are playing a part in the "political zoology". So can they have a narrative function in the Lynch cosmos? When we talk about animals, we just talk about some very specific animals. This unaware exclusion of the most of the animals is often forgotten, not founded and not explicitly marked. Only if this shortage is being reconstructed, animals can become an object of cultural studies. Against this background, our initial question turns into a guideline through the zoo of the Lynchian animals.

How can we make the theoretical concept of shortage productive for the lecture of David

5 The human body as most powerful machine has been described Fritz Kahn, cf. U. v. Debschitz and T. v. Debschitz, 2009.

6 In "Alien" (1979) Ridley Scotts presents the well known law of cinema that suspense is not produced by pictures of the unknown or alien but by pictures of our own images: "Alien" is better than all sequels because it doesn't show the monster or at least shows it only at the showdown. Cf. Scott, Ridley: Alien. USA 1979.

Lynch's movies?⁷ At first we should make an inventory of all animals living in Lynch's zoo and their specific narrative function. However, as we have mentioned before, the cosmos of Lynch is no habitat for animals at all. Which animal would be able to survive in the industrial area of "Eraserhead"? Or in the violent environment of "Blue Velvet" or "Wild at Heart"? Nevertheless, we find several, precisely constructed animal scenes in Lynch's movies. We have to figure out the narrative function of these rare creatures, that are able to survive in the industrial world.

There are only a few animals, that can be found in the world of Lynch and they have distinct narrative functions. Now, what are those few animals? Before answering this question, a second argument should be put into play: the Lynch zoo is structured by space and time and the animals mark the different places and times. By the enactment of an animal either a topological or a temporal narrative function is generated. Animals can mark a specific location and also the interspaces and interfaces or heterotopian spaces. Those locations, the spaces in between worlds, are characteristic for David Lynch's movies. Animals can also mark a specific time or even cause a time shift. Lynch breaks with those numerous temporal cuts the linearity of the medium film and creates new forms of filmic spaces.⁸

Different Place. Different Rules

The topological function of an animal becomes clear in the renowned initial scene of "Blue Velvet" from 1986. Actually, everything begins with a dog, sitting on a fire truck. I will come back to this funny detail later. The movie "Blue Velvet" commences with a disturbance of the simple and the ordinary. A likely beginning in film history. In this apparently perfect and idyllic world, the evil is only apparent in the television. Only a common garden hose fails and causes a heart attack, almost leading to the death of Jeffrey Beaumont's father. After this onset, the family dog slobbers water from the water hose, which is now sprinkling randomly into the air, and a small child runs cheerfully through the scene.

But now, the beetles appear. They lead the camera's eye into the dark inside of this seemingly perfect world. The penetrating eye of the camera discovers some beetles in the grass, just next to the nearly dead body. This discovery is accompanied by Angelo Badalamenti's title song, which descends into archaic noise. As the sound resembles more and more the sound of working machines, the camera zooms into the beetles's world: The amorphous and deep black beetles seem to be working in the hidden. After a hard cut, the promotional sign "Welcome to Lumberton" signals the movie audience, that we have finally arrived in the here and today. The movie needed two minutes to get to this beginning point.

Although, it is impossible to identify the insects in this initial scene, we're quite sure that those black and busy things are beetles. One species is iconic for beetles and the setting in which we see them here: the dung beetle. Or, to be more precisely, Lumberton is also inhabited by dung beetles from the zoological family of the Geotrupidae. Dung beetles can easily be identified by their intensive blue-black colour and their beautiful ridged thorax, and they practice intensive parental investment. They dig complex and deep burrow systems into

⁷ Cf. for the shortage of discourses e. g. Foucault, 1981.

⁸ Cf. Foucault, 1998.

the earth, where the females deposit their eggs. The eggs become grubs, the grubs pupate and become beetles, who struggle to break through the earth to live there very shortly and with the only purpose to breed.

This metamorphosis and hatching is also a subject of Lynch's first sponsored short movie "The Grandmother" (1970, first scene). However, the animals in this movie don't lead the spectator into the inside world of Lumberton or any other city. The narration proceeds vice versa: starting with a birth process, the narration guides the visitor out of the inside and organic of the body through the turf into the outside, the real world. In this movie the inside and outside are clearly differentiated by the media technique: the inside is an animated cartoon in contrast to the outside, which is a live action movie.

This clear medial and narrative difference between the inside and the outside—one of Lynch's major topics—is being penetrated by the behaviour of the adult protagonists. The parents do not talk to their lonely, adolescent, male son, instead they utter animalistic sounds. Leaving aside the fact that on the pictorial level the parents are humans, they behave like animals. The formally dressed son does not belong to neither of the two worlds: He came from nowhere to be nowhere. At this point, the disturbance prevails the narration. The visual is intensified by the animalistic-mechanical sounds. The soundtrack underlines continuously the surreal dimension of the pictures. This surrealism brings us back to the mysterious owls. The grandmother, who is the resting pole of the film, suddenly utters the sound of an owl and dissolves into flickering pictures. "The owls are not what they seem".

If this is true for owls, it must be valid for robins also. Let us once again return to the movie "Blue Velvet". In "Blue Velvet" we follow the animals and enter the underworld of Lumberton through the cut-off ear of Dorothy's husband. The ear is inhabited by lots of ants. Jeffrey trips over this ear while walking through the forests of Lumberton. In the woods, the birds sing and the crickets chirp. Already in this initial setting, it becomes clear, that the filmmaker matches the topology of Lumberton with different animal species: the flying, happy, peaceful animals and the scrabbling, ugly, struggling ones. Subsequently, Jeffrey gets entry into Dorothy's flat by disguising himself as a "Bug Man". He pretends to be a vermin exterminator, somebody who kills all beetles, bugs, and other insects. The spectator knows or at least suspects, that he won't have success. We know that this form of negative success (the principal impossibility to eliminate all disturbances) and all its consequential orgies of violence, will evolve an enormous narrative potential.⁹

For this reason, there are almost no animals in the following middle part of the movie "Blue Velvet". Though, one can hear the crickets chirping from time to time. However, there is only one scene in which animals do have a significant narrative function. It's Sandy Williams' (Laura Dern) tale about the dark world without any robins and without any love. Sandy says: "There is trouble till the robins come." Yet before the robin really returns, some heads will roll. Although, Jeffrey has reported everything in detail to the police and we see him watering the lawn, just as his father did before, totally dressed in white and with the birds singing in the background, we know: As long as Frank Booth is still alive, this world is threatened. No narration without disturbance. Consequently the film ends with a final act, in which Jeffrey shoots Frank—out of the wardrobe, the place of the first intrusion.

⁹ Cf. for the narrative dimension of communication theory Serres, 1987.

Nothing else can be told in “Blue Velvet”. In the end, Jeffrey lies in his garden and looks at the most famous robin of the cinematic history. His father is healthy again, the dog from the beginning of the film once again passes by with the fire engine, Sandy is preparing food, and the robin sits all of a sudden on the windowsill, having a beetle in its beak. Lynch’s film script and the original four-hour version of “Blue Velvet” intended a far more intensive staging of the animals’ motifs, which were cut out in the final version of the film. Thus, remains the much-debated issue if the spectator recognizes the robin’s mechanics. The question, if the robin is a real animal or a mechanic device, will remain open, as well as the question, why a world without disturbance wouldn’t work.¹⁰

One could find very easily a lot of other references for the assumption that certain animals mark specific places in David Lynch’s film cosmos. The animals illustrate the complex topology of that cosmos.¹¹ Over all, it’s the insects, the whole bunch of beetles, flies, worms, maggots and other vermin, that is crawling out from the inside of things and pierces the surface of the earth, allowing the eye of the camera to look into the dark. To put it the other way round, one could say that David Lynch is some kind of an animal filmmaker, as he follows the vermin to where it lives, in order to show, that this place is everywhere, like “An Eternal Golden Braid”.¹²

I will give two short examples for this animal filmmaking. Firstly, one could think of “Wild at heart”, where the flies are sitting on the vomit of Lula. The flies mark the change in the relationship between Sailor and Lula. From this moment on, their relationship is not superficial anymore. The second example is the extremely strange worm in the movie “Eraserhead”. In one of the very typical stop-motion scenes the worm seems to be dancing, he is surprisingly agile and runs across the scene. Suddenly, the strange worm shows what he’s really able to do: all of a sudden he vanishes and reappears nearly simultaneously in another place. The worm shares this mysterious ability with the Mystery Man (Robert Blake) in Lynch’s movie “Lost Highway”.

There is even more to the Lynchian underworld animals, as the filmmaker shows us in a completely different genre. In 1991 Lynch films a campaign against waste, called “Clean Up. We Care about New York”. This time Lynch doesn’t confront the spectator with beetles, but with rats. Rats are an animal species, that is clearly associated with the disease-causing underworld. Although, this is an imaginative association, it’s not the rat, who brings the disease, it’s the flea. Already in 1898 Paul-Louis Simond found out that the plague bacterium needs the flea as a medium or fomes. A direct infection is impossible. But this discovery did not change the rat’s bad image anymore. In a very tantalising way, Lynch’s public service commercial recalls all the horrifying images of rats that we know from other films. Thus, Lynch shows us in his animal scenes our own imaginary images of animals.

I would like to finish my argument of topological animals with an example that is by no means typical for David Lynch—or maybe even therefore very typical. In a commercial issued in 2000, we see Bambi, the little deer that has been animated by Walt Disney already in 1942. The cute little animal runs peacefully through the woods. After a short while,

¹⁰ For the interdependency of physical disturbance and modern literaricity cf. Kassung, 2001.

¹¹ For the spatial or topological turn cf. e. g. Weigel, 2002.

¹² Vf. Hofstadter, 1979.

it has to cross a street and with a sharp crosscut we see a car crashing with the animal. The viewer knows what will happen, but David Lynch takes us to a different place, with different rules: Colliding with Bambi, the car, and not the deer, get smashed into pieces. As a spectator we made the mistake to believe, that we recognized our everyday world, because of superficial similarities. Topological animals like the mentioned one can be found in all films of David Lynch. In other words, the cosmos of Lynch is structured by a considerable number of animals. These animals have the function to mark and pierce the difference between the inside and the outside.

The Angriest Dog in the World

Between 1983 and 1992 the Cartoon “The Angriest Dog in the World” was published in the Los Angeles Reader. This cartoon was always composed of exactly the same series of pictures. In this static comic strip every of the four pictures shows a snarling dog in front of a house. Only the text in the speech bubbles of the two residents changes. It’s a medium, whose channels run out of synchronization. In this comic, picture and text disturb each other in the same way as Angelo Badalamenti’s sound track confuses David Lynch’s pictures. And once again it’s an animal, a dog, that embodies this temporal disorder.

In many respects, the dog is a very particular animal. The dog is possibly the most important animal for David Lynch. It’s the first animal in his cosmos, that appears as itself. It firstly shows up in Lynch’s first full-length movie “Eraserhead” from 1997. In comparison to Lynch’s other movies, “Eraserhead” states many animals and for the first time the dog. The soundtrack announces his appearance when Henry Spencer (Henry Nance) walks through the desolate industrial landscape. Suddenly, two dogs are barking in the distance, whereon Henry jinks scared. For now nothing more happens. Only the dogs’ barking signals danger and gives an acoustical hint about the further development of the narration.

In the following, Henry Spencer arrives at the house of the parents of his ex-girlfriend Mary. The extremely faltering and disturbing welcome scene is once again added with a confusing and very animalistic soundtrack. The camera makes out the source of these animal noises as it moves around and catches a dog breastfeeding her whelps. Now, we know the reason for the previously warning of the dogs’ barking and how the film will further evolve: Mary is pregnant and her pregnancy will throw Henry off the track. The dog has the narrative function of a messenger. He anticipates things, and he knows what will come. The dogs’ barking is a signal from the future, that is readable as a (intra)diagetic and extradiagetic sign.¹³

This motif can also be observed in “Mulholland Drive”, a film from 2001, in which animals are even more rarely seen. In contrast to “Eraserhead”, where the narrative time and place was not determinable, in “Mulholland Drive” we find ourselves placed in northern Los Angeles, in an apartment at Sunset Boulevard, nearby the famous “Mulholland Drive”. At least, this is what we conclude from the few reliable scenes of the movie. This is all the more surprising since the real world shown in the movie seems to be without animals at all. The humans in this movie live, as Georg Seeßlen states, in an “outside world, that defies any

13 Cf. Genette, 2010.

handling or modification (or revolution) by the subject”.¹⁴ In this uninhabitable world there is also no place for animals. And in this seemingly ordinary world the spectator finds no bird passing occasionally through the screen, no dog at the street, no fly before the window-pane, no beetle on the ground. There is no animal except the human. The man is the only inhabitant of David Lynch’s Los Angeles.

There are only two animalistic remnants left: firstly, the hunting trophy above the flickering lamp at the enclosure of the mysterious cowboy and secondly, the dog shit (what can easily be misunderstood as some sort of slapstick). When Betty Elms (Naomi Watts) moves into her ant Ruth’s flat, landlady Coco (Ann Miller) is showing her around. The women discover that a dog has made his mark on the extremely neat courtyard. Coco comments this with pointing out, that nothing can be as bad as the boxing kangaroo, that has been kept by a former landlord. As already mentioned, this scene ought to be slapstick, since the dog dirt contradicts ironically the neat and innocent look of Betty Elms, who is wearing a pinkish pullover covered with glittering rhinestones.

However, the dog dirt is not only a real, but also a symbolic sign. In order to understand this symbolic level, we will briefly recall the movies’ story. After her car crash, Rita alias Camilla Rhodes (Laura Harring) is climbing down the hill into the nightly Los Angeles. When a pair of lovers is coming her way at the pavement, she hides like a dog in the bushes. She loses her consciousness and awakes the next morning. This awakening is shot out of a low angle as in a dog’s perspective. Soon afterwards, Rita hides again, this time from her returning aunt under the table, once more like a dog, and again loses her consciousness.

This short summary allows us to interpret the symbolic trace of the dog dirt as the announcement of a disturbance, of an intruder into the well ordered life of Betty Elms. When the landlady asks unambiguously “Do you have any pets?”, Betty answers correctly “No!”. In this very moment, she yet can’t know that Rita will be a much more absurd flatmate than the boxing kangaroo. By the way, the boxing kangaroo is a reference to the short film “The Boxing Kangaroo” directed and produced by the German filmmaker Max Skladanowsky in 1895.

As in “Eraserhead” the main plot of “Mulholland Drive” begins with an incidence that is announced to the viewer by a dog. And in both cases this incidence is cruel. Furthermore David Lynch realizes exactly the same structure in “Blue Velvet”, where a dog passes the Beaumont’s house on a fire engine, and in “Lost Highway”, where a mysterious dogs’ barking announces the arrival of the second videotape showing the interior of the house and later Fred Madison (Bill Pullman) killing Rene Madison (Patricia Arquette).

In order to bring out more the narrative function of the dog, we will have a short look into the cultural history of dogs. Dogs are a quite young species. The reason for this is, that the breeding and domestication of animals requires their functional differentiation, which took place together with the topological separation of urban and country areas in the Neolithic Age. We have no notice of domestic animals before the first agrarian societies in the 10th millennium BC. This is the beginning of the interdependent relationship between human and animal. In this relation, the animal initially became the (distorting) mirror of man. There are many hypotheses trying to explain the mechanisms of this domestication, but we

¹⁴ Seeßlen, 2007, p. 208.

still have no proof. Archaeological findings document domestic dogs at around 11.000 BC. Referring to these discoveries, the dog could be the oldest domestic animal.¹⁵

Since then, dogs help at the hunting, they defend house and garden or even undertake war tasks. This intrinsic coexistence of human and animals ceased in the course of the 19th century. About two hundred years ago the displacement of the animal by the machine began. Even though, we still can see Bernese Mountain Dogs saving a skier buried by an avalanche or guide dogs navigating their blind holders through the city: The dog turned into a useless pet. This means that, just at the same time when farm animals were displaced from the direct human environment, some of them returned without further ado as pets. They ended up in the metropolises, in the living rooms and on the folds of the bourgeois families.

With the purposeless appreciation of the dog as a pet, the selective breeding of dogs, in order to intensify or to eliminate certain characteristics, began. As a result, the interest shifted from the dog as a species to the particular abilities of the particular breeds. Since then, the dog has no longer been just a dog, but a German Shepherd, a Dachshund or a Poodle. And every single one of these breeds has its own human-animal relation and its own imaginary.¹⁶ This raises the question, of whether there is a well-defined and well-portrayable “kynomorphism” in the cosmos of Lynch.¹⁷ What kind of relations has the filmmaker constructed between dog and men?

To make it clear, the first narrative function of the dog is to be an announcing animal. As indicated above, the corresponding scenes in “Eraserhead”, “Mulholland Drive”, and “Lost Highway” are strikingly similar. Hence, the dog is equipped with a narrative potential, that has already been enacted in Homer’s epics. At Ulysses’ return to Ithaca, after his decennial odyssey, his dog Argos is the first one to recognize and to welcome him—without any divine assistance.¹⁸ The dog Argos had spent all this time awaiting his master’s return. Ulysses’ heart itself is barking like a dog and his return to his hometown resembles the behaviour of an obeying and faithful dog. Thus, we can underline two key characteristics of the dog: absolute faithfulness and tamed wildness. Both of these characteristics can be found in David Lynch’s films. We have already discussed the absolute faithfulness of the dog, turning the animal into a messenger, who anticipates coming events. It is the dog, who turns the story into a specific direction. This narrative function of the dog is its temporal function.

The second characteristic of the dog is its tamed wildness, and there are a lot of examples for this trait. Its tamed wildness makes the dog a companion of danger. The dog has raw instincts and the desire to hunt and to kill. In “Wild at Heart” from 1990 a dog not only prefigures violence, it also embodies it. In an important scene Johnnie Ferragut (Harry Dean Stanton) lies in a hotel bed watching an animal film, where coyotes devour a zebra. As it is generally known, coyotes belong to the zoological family of the Canidae, including domestic dogs as well as wolves or foxes. The scene depicts a blood frenzy that is Johnnie unable to escape from. Totally dehumanized he barks together with the coyotes until the telephone’s ring brings him down to earth. However, also the phone call is a blood frenzy: Marietta Fortune (Diane Ladd) calls up, with all her blood-red hunger for revenge. Marietta

15 Cf. Macho, 1997b, p. 186.

16 This argument can certainly be prolonged to all kinds of animals, cf. Kassung et al., 2012.

17 Macho, 2004, p. 76.

18 Cf. Homer, 1990, 17. Gesang, Vers 290–327.

vomits after the phone call—just like her daughter some time later, but for another reason...

Shortly afterwards, the spectator can see, how the animal film, the one Johnnie was watching, continues. After the coyotes ate up, the vultures get their chance to have a pick out of the cadaver. We can observe how they pile their beaks into the flesh of the dead zebra. Those are again animals, who are penetrating a surface. After a hard cut, we see Marietta vomiting. While the eye of the camera slowly moves down her body, pausing at her shoes: the shoes have beak-shaped toecaps.

Leaving this blood orgies aside, we will return to the dog. The dog turns out to be an ambiguous animal. Pretty much as the depicted man, the dog is at the same time faithful and wild, tamed and gory, domestic and driven by instinct. This ambiguity is very clearly articulated by the crazy rocket scientist oo Spool (Jack Nancy) in “Wild at heart”. oo Spool’s dog is barking at people on a camping site in front of the motel. We can’t get an image of this dog because firstly, oo Spool doesn’t reveal the breed and secondly, his dog is always with him. In this case, ‘with him’ also means ‘in him’. The dog instantly barks, what makes Sailor and Lulu cringe about what is going to come. The dog’s barking comes from the future.

In addition to that, in the showdown of “Wild at heart”, Bobby Peru shoots a hand off from one of the two bank clerks. Actually, this clerk should be already as dead as his partner. Though, extremely vivid and highly rational he begins to search for his hand in the believe that surgeons will be able to reattach it. (However, in the case of Henry’s father-in-law Mr. X (Allen Joseph), this surgery did not work out.) The topic of the man-machine or machine-man dominates this scene. After a cut, the spectator sees, that a dog carries the clerk’s hand away, like a trophy, and the dog disappears around the corner of the house. Even though, it has been a violent scene, nothing really happened besides the robbery of a clerk’s hand. So, the fairy godmother will get everything right, and no dark insect is disturbing Sailor’s final song.

The David Lynch Zoo

To sum up, I will present two conclusions about Lynch’s animals. Firstly, all animals in the filmic cosmos of David Lynch are part of a complex interdependency between humans and machines. The many above mentioned examples show, that the animals either are decomposed meticulously into organic forms, or that the humans behave in an extremely animalistic way. All in all, the anthropological distinction between animal, human and machine is therefore abolished.

In Lynch’s industrial and inanimate world the humans grow lonely and the animals, as former fellow beings, have been driven away by the machines. Hence, there are on one side the ubiquitous machines, dominating the soundscape with machine-like noises and sometimes merging into the organic. On the other side, there are displaced but lively animals, which are extremely important for the narrative structure of the movie.

Secondly, those animals disturb the cinematic telling and break up the linear structure of the medium film in such a way, that they get the story going. The animals have distinctive narrative functions, which are assigned to different animal species. As I demonstrated, the dog (mostly) has an important temporal function: dogs anticipate future events, they keep

the narration running. On the contrary, insects (primarily) do have a topological function. Insects mark intersections between different states or levels and they dissolve the border between the inside and the outside.

And there are more animals species that could be discussed relating to their narrative, temporal and topological function in David Lynch's movies, but this will be a task for further research.

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