

## Dwelling with Animal-Others: Towards a Definition of Multispecies Community

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*A pig trawling through the mud / in between chickens, ducks, geese, goats, and sheep / the din  
and clamour of life recedes— / and with it the question “Was ist der Mensch?”<sup>1</sup>*

### Animal Worlds, Shared Worlds

Modern western ontologies and capitalist economies are founded upon a human/animal hierarchy which overwhelmingly reduces other-than-human animals<sup>2</sup> to ‘dumb brutes’ or stimulus-response machines driven by instinct<sup>3</sup>. These prevailing visions of the nonhuman denies the possibility of sharing socio-cultural/politico-ethical communities with animals. This denial of community, of a shared world, permits the current scale of animal commodification and exploitation. To be mass produced and slaughtered in industrial agricultural systems, experimented upon, confined and enslaved for entertainment, and casually disposed of or systematically eradicated as ‘pests’, animals must be continually rendered<sup>4</sup> as ‘subhuman’—their world must be understood as lesser. But the last several decades have seen a convergence in efforts aimed at countering the dominant understanding of animals as ‘poor in world’<sup>5,6</sup>. Diverse interventions increasingly illuminate the rich inner worlds of animals—their phenomenological experiences or subjectivities—and the possibilities of new relations with them. Such explorations stem from disparate fields of ethology, comparative psychology, and related fields<sup>7</sup>, as well as multidisciplinary social science and humanities realms of animal studies, multispecies studies, and environmental humanities<sup>8</sup>. In acknowledging that animals too are ‘world-forming’, that

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<sup>1</sup> OB, epigrams, April 26

<sup>2</sup> Hereafter, ‘animals’

<sup>3</sup> See Christ’s, *Images of Animals*, discussion of mechanomorphic reductionisms

<sup>4</sup> See Shukin, *Rendering Animals*

<sup>5</sup> This is expressed most clearly by Heidegger in his *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, wherein he advances that inanimate objects are ‘worldless’, animals are ‘poor in world’, whereas only ‘man’ is ‘world-forming’

<sup>6</sup> Though such human-animal dichotomies are central to modern western humanist thought, they are by no means universal, as has been highlighted by many Indigenous scholars; see for example: Belcourt, ‘Animal bodies, colonial subjects’; Tallbear, ‘Interspecies Thinking’; Todd, ‘Ontological turn’

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Bekoff, *Emotional Lives of Animals*; Kiley-Worthington, “Mental homologues of mammals”; King, *How Animals Grieve*

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Acampora, *Corporal Compassion*; Buchanan, *Onto-Ethologies*; Calarco, *Zoographies*; Fuentes, ‘Ethnoprimateology’; Haraway, *When Species Meet*; Lestel et al., ‘Phenomenology of animal life’; Van Dooren, et al., ‘Multispecies studies’

they inhabit rich worlds filled with meaning, we can begin to recognize the ways in which they co-shape shared worlds—communities—alongside, or together with, us.

But what does it mean to co-create community with animal-Others and dwell with them, not only in a shared physical environment, but a *social world*? How can we develop an understanding of multispecies community which refuses to reduce animals to our mirror-image but rather preserves their radical alterity? An understanding which refuses a utopic vision of co-flourishing based on predefined characteristics rooted in human experience?

To explore these questions, we draw on ethnographic research conducted by our research group in 2018 at VINE (Veganism is the Next Evolution) Sanctuary. In so doing, we engage a number of theoretical interventions, including Ingold’s elaboration of dwelling, which understands all beings as “immersed from the start ... in an active, practical and perceptual engagement with constituents of the dwelt in world”<sup>9</sup>. In this view, “the world continually comes into being around the inhabitant, and its manifold constituents take on significance through their incorporation into a regular pattern of life activity”<sup>10</sup>. Drawing on this dwelt ontology, we consider the ‘world-forming’ or meaning-making practices of animals by exploring the processes involved in: inhabiting meaningful homes, through dwelt practices that weave a storied landscape; and negotiating shared sociality, through ongoing embodied performances and practices of enskilment. We conclude that in both the richness of their social relations and their storied experiences, the animals at VINE find themselves *in medias res*, always engaged with a world that continually comes into being around them, opening the possibility for shared topographies of becoming—for community.

### **VINE: A Multispecies Community**

Our multispecies ethnography at VINE Sanctuary was undertaken as part of the ongoing research of the Kingston Interspecies Community (KISC) Working Group, which explores sanctuaries for formerly farmed animals as fertile sites for imagining new frontiers in interspecies justice and community<sup>11</sup>. VINE is situated on 100 acres of hilly terrain in central

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<sup>9</sup> Ingold, *Perception of the environment*, 42

<sup>10</sup> Ingold, *Perception of the environment*, 153

<sup>11</sup> See <https://animalpolitics.queensu.ca/study/kingston-interspecies-community/>

Vermont and is a permanent home for three human and over 600 nonhuman residents. Aside from providing care and shelter to animals escaping exploitation amidst the surrounding “topography of enmity”<sup>12</sup>, VINE explicitly grounds their work “within an ecofeminist understanding of the interconnection of all life and the intersection of all forms of oppression”<sup>13</sup>. This anti-oppressive orientation towards social and ecological justice is reflected in the ethos of VINE’s work, including their outreach initiatives in the broader Springfield community and beyond. It also finds expression in the internal relationships amongst the human and nonhuman residents at the sanctuary. Contrary to many sanctuaries, VINE does not segregate animal residents by species, but rather aims to create the “least restrictive environment”<sup>14</sup>, through creative spatial designs and careful introductions and observations. VINE enables enactments of animal agency that challenge human assumptions about their social roles and behaviours<sup>15</sup>.

VINE is composed of three distinct areas. The lower sanctuary—‘The Valley’—is home to many birds, along with several humans, dogs, and cats, and comprises a smaller and more familiar house-and-backyard setup. The ‘Upper Pasture’ is composed of semi-forested craggy hillsides, occupied by a herd of cows who traverse its extent, weaving amongst the trees and summiting its peak. The middle sanctuary—‘The Commons’—revolves around an open hoop barn situated amidst rolling pasture, across from a house and surrounded by smaller coops and enclosures. Residents traverse freely in and out of the sand-bedded barn, to the annular pond, and all over the grassy slope. Human community members at the time of our visit included sanctuary co-founder patrice jones, coordinator Cheryl Wylie, care provider Kevin Cudabac, resident Kathy Gorish, and numerous volunteers. The over 600 animal residents included turkeys, peacocks, cows, chickens, goats, sheep, ducks, geese, emus, pigeons, doves, dogs, cats, and, at the time of writing, one pig. The stories recounted below feature a number of individuals we came to know in particular, including sheep Shadow, pig Valkyrie, alpacas Avalon and his children Domino and Max, cows Autumn and Maddox, and turkeys Paula, Hypatia, Cleopatra, and Fabio.

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<sup>12</sup> Pachirat, ‘Sanctuary’, 339

<sup>13</sup> VINE, ‘About Us’, accessed October 28, 2019, <http://vine.bravebirds.org/about-us/>

<sup>14</sup> Blatter *et al.*, ‘Agency in Community’; Donaldson and Kymlicka, ‘Farmed animal sanctuaries’, 58

<sup>15</sup> Donaldson and Kymlicka, ‘Farmed animal sanctuaries’

## Multispecies Ethnography, Dwelt Animal Geography, Attunement

Our multispecies ethnography was conducted by eight researchers from the KISC group who spent four days at VINE in the spring of 2018. Multispecies ethnographic methods explore “contact zones where lines separating nature from culture have broken down, where encounters between *Homo sapiens* and other beings generate mutual ecologies and coproduced niches”<sup>16</sup>. A number of interventions inspired our research approach. First, Lestel et al.’s ‘bi-constructivist’ paradigm engages a phenomenological ethology to explore animal lifeworlds and the “co-constitution of place, subjectivity and becoming”<sup>17</sup>. Rather than a mechanistic approach to characterizing animals’ *behaviour*, we focused on their *activity*, or meaning-making practices, which “entails interpretation and emplacement”<sup>18</sup>. In so doing, we found helpful Brigstocke and Noorani’s delineation of a posthuman ‘attunement’, involving the “subtle, affective modulations in the relations between different bodies”<sup>19</sup>. We approached our research with an attitude of empathy and openness, becoming attuned to ‘more-than-human voices’ through our embodied relatings with individual others<sup>20</sup>. Finally, and tying into our grounding in Ingold’s writings on dwelling, Johnson’s delineation of a ‘dwelt animal geography’ encourages researchers to engage methods that recognize that animals “dwell in the world in the same processual manner as humans, and allows relationships of understanding to grow between them”<sup>21</sup>. By spending time with animals in their spaces, our insights are grounded in “real life sensual engagements revealing real life sensual experiences”<sup>22</sup>.

While at VINE, we immersed ourselves in sanctuary life, observing and engaging with animal and human residents and assisting with activities such as fence-building, food provisioning, and welcoming new community members. We took written field notes, photographs, and videos, and augmented our glimpses into the lives of animal residents with stories from human co-habitants, staff, and volunteers. We struggled to navigate our positionality

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<sup>16</sup> Kirksey and Helmreich, ‘Multispecies ethnography’, 546

<sup>17</sup> Lestel et al., ‘Phenomenology of animal life’, 129

<sup>18</sup> Lestel et al., ‘Phenomenology of animal life’, 129, italics in original

<sup>19</sup> Brigstocke and Noorani, ‘Posthuman attunements’, 2

<sup>20</sup> Brigstocke and Noorani, ‘Posthuman attunements’, 3

<sup>21</sup> Johnston, ‘Dwelt animal geography’, 642

<sup>22</sup> Johnston, ‘Dwelt animal geography’, 646

as researchers, negotiating the complex ethical and methodological questions of encounter, boundaries, contact, and interpretation. We felt our way through these tensions, both individually, through our own experimentation and intuition, guided by animal residents, and together, through conversations over shared meals. Post-trip reflections, data-sharing, and individual and group qualitative coding provided the groundwork for this reflection. We have chosen to feature excerpts from our field notes in an effort to foreground the animals we encountered at VINE and acknowledge them as active participants in knowledge production, rather than presenting abstract theorizing divorced from the lives and experiences of actual animals<sup>23</sup>. In what follows, we draw on these empirical accounts to explore the dynamic topography of becoming enacted at VINE through a consideration of the meaning-making practices of animal residents in terms of their inhabitation of a storied landscape and their experience of emergent sociality born of ongoing negotiations, performances, and enskilment. In acknowledging the rich shared worlds of animals, we begin to glimpse the ways in which non-alienated meaning-making practices and respect for alterity give rise to the possibility of multispecies community.

### **Inhabiting Meaningful Homes: Weaving a Storied Landscape**

In exploring the more-than-human world-forming practices at VINE, we begin by considering the significance of community as *emplaced*, recognizing that becoming-with fellow beings is entangled with processes of place-making. Following van Dooren and Rose, we understand place-making as akin to storying. By foregrounding the “embodied, situated, kinetic and narrational nature of place”<sup>24</sup>, we emphasize the ways in which animals do more than occupy space, they inhabit meaningful homes<sup>25</sup>. Residents’ storied experiences unfold within rhythms of daily routines and movements through territories, appropriations of sanctuary spaces, and

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<sup>23</sup> Empirical observations recounted herein stem from the fieldnotes of the eight members of our research team: Omar Bachour (OB), Charlotte Blattner (CB), Darren Chang (DC), Sue Donaldson (SD), Will Kymlicka (WK), Agnes Tam (AT), Lauren Van Patter (LVP), and Ryan Wilcox (RW)

<sup>24</sup> van Dooren and Rose, ‘Storied-places’, 2

<sup>25</sup> Building on Ingold, *Perception of the environment*; Barua, ‘Bio-geo-graphy’; Van Patter and Hovorka, “‘Of place’ or ‘of people’”

ongoing processes of meaning-making through which affective relations with the landscape—and other individuals—emerge.

Stories that reveal habits, trails, and rhythms of daily life illumine the shape and feel of territories as residents traverse VINE’s landscape. Rather than viewing ‘territory’ in reductive, behaviourist registers, we follow Lestel *et al.* in understanding it as “the collection of greater and lesser intensities and rhythms formed by meaningful inhabitation and activity; it is the extension of the self and lifeways of the animal”<sup>26</sup>. In the semi-wilderness of the upper pasture, the cows “are as close to feral cows as you will see. They are out on many acres, in roughly cleared craggy mountainous terrain where they are free to roam as they please”<sup>27</sup>; “they’re like deer, and will go into the forest/ trees in sunny weather”<sup>28</sup>. As we explored the terrain, we found ample “[e]vidence (cow pats and footprints) that cows roam all over the upper pasture”<sup>29</sup>:

*“Cows in the upper sanctuary seem to enjoy, and fully utilize, the freedom to traverse (i) the cleared pasture (all the way to the sanctuary peak), and (ii) the parts of the surrounding woods they are able to access. Rarely will they be found in the barn. As a result, making sure all the cows are accounted for at day’s end can sometimes take up hours of Kevin’s time”*<sup>30</sup>

For these individuals, the freedom to explore, to move across a varied landscape, opens up possibilities for becoming bovine in ways that are denied to the vast majority of cows subjected to industrial farming practices. It is a performance of ferality, of wild ungulate, enacted as warm bodies seek dappled shade, and cloven hooves cling to jagged rock. These movements also constitute a means of becoming at home, as “territory is known by its margins and bounds, by places to eat, to bed down, or to linger, by muster points, and according to networks of paths”<sup>31</sup>.

So, too, are territories enacted in the middle sanctuary:

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<sup>26</sup> Lestel *et al.*, ‘Phenomenology of animal life’, 143

<sup>27</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 25, from patrice

<sup>28</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 28, from Kevin

<sup>29</sup> SD, fieldnotes, April 26

<sup>30</sup> OB, fieldnotes, April 28

<sup>31</sup> Lorimer, ‘Herding memories’, 501

*“Sheep group did a morning round of grazing at the lower pasture near the alpacas, then returned to upper area near the pigeon house to rest. Kathy says they usually do two grazing rounds: once in the morning once in the afternoon”<sup>32</sup>;*

*“the sheep (except for Shadow and Lamby) are all up on the straw pile behind the trailer, six lying down, two standing. Eating hay, chewing, resting, eyes closed in the sun.*

*Yesterday when [it was] rainy they were in the barn, today [there is] nice weather and it seems to be more active outside”<sup>33</sup>.*

Patterns of foraging and rest, undertaken individually or collectively, give a feel for the everyday practices of place-making central to communal dwelling, as bustling commotion surrounding food or fair weather gives rise to quiet contentment in moments sheltered from the afternoon drizzle, or savouring the streaming sunlight of early spring.

In exploring residents’ storied experiences, we attend to processes of meaning-making through which affective relations with the landscape, and other individuals, emerge. In a dwelt ontology meaning is “immanent in the relational contexts of people’s practical engagement with their lived-in environments”<sup>34</sup>. As we move about our daily activities, we become at home through micro-scale relatings of feeling body and worldly substrate:

*“[Valkyrie] moves to a smaller stall where she shovels around a lot of hay, and makes a nest. This takes several minutes until it’s in a shape she likes. Once done, she lies down and rolls herself in”<sup>35</sup>;*

*“around six hens and two roosters were having a communal dust bath, rolling on their sides, scratching with their feet, pecking at the ground and throwing dust up with their feathers”<sup>36</sup>.*

Through such practices, experiences of comfort and familiarity are cultivated, replete with spatial and temporal significance:

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<sup>32</sup> DC, fieldnotes, April 27

<sup>33</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 28

<sup>34</sup> Ingold, *Perception of the environment*, 168

<sup>35</sup> CB, fieldnotes, April 28

<sup>36</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 26

*“Autumn... does not like to eat with the other cows. She waits for them to finish and exit the barn before making her way to Cheryl, who also knows to wait for her. This daily routine has fostered a unique affective bond between the two”<sup>37</sup>.*

For Autumn and Cheryl, and many other residents, emplaced routines can be thought of as dwelt rituals. In a lifeworld as complex and varied as VINE, such rituals are innumerable. While many involve interpersonal relations, others centre on connections to certain sanctuary spaces or features:

*“Shadow is in her ‘favourite spot’ behind the truck. Kathy and Cheryl laughed because she’s usually behind the truck but while it’s in a different spot. Now the truck isn’t in its regular spot but she’s still lying behind it. So apparently her favourite spot is behind where[ever] the truck is”<sup>38</sup>.*

Expressions of personal preferences highlight the affective dimensions of place-making as a more-than-human experience. Animals too are “inhabitants of a world in continual emergence, brought about through embodied, experiential movement and dynamic social relations”<sup>39</sup>. Certain spaces, features, and routines become meaningful to sanctuary residents as they learn about, are affected by, and cultivate meaning through engagements with a storied landscape.

Stories of becoming at home can also be woven from signs of appropriation wherein sanctuary spaces are shaped by residents to suit their needs and desires. These acts of appropriation sometimes result in unexpected practices:

*“Squeaker, a small dexterous chicken, has a well-known habit of squeezing under the ‘cantina’ (the small chicken coop by the pond behind the central barn) where seeds, which the others cannot reach, have slipped through the floor cracks”<sup>40</sup>;*

*“Mirana, a ‘very tough,’ lithe goat repeatedly gets into the main hay barrel, where she has access to the fodder from within, while the goats feeding on the outside express puzzlement at the shifting hay!”<sup>41</sup>*

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<sup>37</sup> OB, reflections April 28, based on SD’s discussion with Cheryl: SD, fieldnotes, April 28

<sup>38</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 27

<sup>39</sup> Barua and Sinha, ‘Animating the urban’, 13

<sup>40</sup> OB, fieldnotes, April 28

<sup>41</sup> OB, fieldnotes, April 28

Squeaker and Mirana surprise human (and non-human) residents and visitors by transgressing expectations, using their bodily attributes to take advantage of spaces and resources in ways that others cannot. The embodied agencies of animals are highlighted in these acts, which subvert expectations about how individuals will engage with human-built structures and access provisioned food. Through these acts of appropriation, the meanings of spaces and landscape features are reshaped by residents:

*“three geese: Rosalind, Alex, Tapanga... prefer to bathe in round bucket closest to the door we saw them in yesterday; it’s supposed to be for drinking but that’s where they like to bathe; they could go down to the pond but then they would be bothered by others; in the bucket they have privacy”<sup>42</sup>.*

Through repeated use, the drinking water tub becomes a place of privacy for the bathing geese, separate from the busier pond. Others similarly carve out spaces of seclusion removed from the bustle of the broader sanctuary:

*“The gated enclosure in the right-hand corner of the barn has been taken over by three goats, who prefer the privacy of the pen to the open commons”<sup>43</sup>.*

For Bishop, Mirana, and Whisper, the wet Vermont springs and endless mud are a blight for hooves evolved, half a world away, for drier, harder earth. The goats have transformed the area behind the gate into a place of safety and rest, suited to their needs in their reduced mobility. As VINE residents engage with features of the landscape, one can begin to see the ways in which animals participate in the production of sanctuary space, shaping meanings through ongoing acts of storying through which the history of VINE as a community is written. These transformational relations, rather than premeditated acts carried out by an internal intentionality upon an external world, are emergent in ongoing organism-environment relations<sup>44</sup>. As we think, feel, learn, and act we both shape, and are shaped by, our surroundings. The sanctuary is not created by humans for occupation by animals, but rather individual and collective practices of becoming at home are generative of the sanctuary itself.

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<sup>42</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 26, from Kathy

<sup>43</sup> OB, fieldnotes, April 25

<sup>44</sup> Ingold, *Perception of the environment*

Through these stories, the ongoing process of “meaning-making that connects the lives of living beings to the worlds they inhabit”<sup>45</sup> are illuminated. Viewing the landscape not only as a place of shared histories, but as emergent through embodied relations attests to animals as active agents in spatial production, challenging their presumed inability to appropriate their environments, to forge a home through dwelt engagements<sup>46</sup>. The ways in which animals use or modify space (re)produces new knowledges and behavioural patterns that iteratively influence ongoing social relations. Explorations into place-making help us to understand the level of richness in community members’ day-to-day lives, and how the structuring of their lived environment affects their phenomenological experiences. The storied landscape of VINE emerges through animals’ trials and trails, motivations and movements. Familiar routes are imprinted onto the land as paths of daily grazing, worn passages from pond to barn, bale feeder to road to fence. As earthen hollows are shaped by the brushing feathers of dust bathing chickens, and snout-moulded muddy furrows follow in Valkyrie’s wake, as we follow trails that weaves across the landscape, forged by feet varied in shape and size, we can see, interwoven within the landscape itself, a story of being together, of community.

### **Negotiating Shared Sociality: Embodied Performances & Enskilment**

Along with considering the place-making practices through which animals’ worlds emerge, we can ask how meaning is generated in relation with others through ongoing, embodied negotiations, performances, and practices of enskilment. Residents’ daily lives are composed of myriad social arrangements and relations. For individuals dwelling in certain sanctuary spaces—the chickens in the lower sanctuary, the cows in the upper pasture—relations are largely intra-specific<sup>47</sup>:

*“In the upper pasture. Majority of cows at closest bale feeder; two pairs of cows lounging off to opposing sides; two ‘loner’ cows; rest at second feeder... Brown cow (without horns) uses head to manoeuver under the neck of another cow. They give up*

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<sup>45</sup> van Dooren and Rose, ‘Storied-places’, 4

<sup>46</sup> Barua and Sinha, ‘Animating the urban’

<sup>47</sup> Though of course our world is invariably a multispecies achievement, and cows in the upper pasture regularly share the space with wild deer, turkeys, and many other species who move through the landscape; this raises interesting questions about how community-members come to be defined within a context such as a sanctuary, which is beyond the scope of this exploration

*space. 'horn tap' from brown cow. As one cow was moving to another feeder, they stopped immediately in front of the horned cow (because they saw me?). Brown cow fairly gently taps cow with their horns to say 'keep moving'. Cow takes that as cue to proceed. White faced cow licking the face of black cow with thick white band"*<sup>48</sup>.

In these maneuverings of heads and horns, gestures of grooming and affection, and cues to carry on or to cede space, we can see sociality as emergent in subtle, ongoing, embodied negotiations between residents. For most individuals, especially those who dwell in The Commons, sociality is a rich inter-species affair:

*"small grey ill goat in corner is up, turning in circles on her elbows, pawing at the straw, rearranging to lie back down next to large white goat; many chickens around them, maybe it's warm next to the goats? One medium red chicken perched on the back of the large white goat"*<sup>49</sup>;

*"three goats were inside behind the gate again, the dark grey goat rubbing his face against an upright wooden pallet; they are chewing slowly, eyes mostly lidded, looking very relaxed; they are surrounded by three/four grooming (preening) red hens and Paula (turkey), also grooming"*<sup>50</sup>.

Within this setting the majority of our observations reflect a rhythm of peaceable cohabitation as residents spend time resting, eating, grooming, playing, and generally moving about their daily routines while in the company of many diverse others. But inevitably, at times, relations are fraught with tension:

*"One chicken chases another across 'geese territory'. One goose immediately stands in the chaser chicken's way and voices up. The chaser chicken goes into one direction; the chased chicken to another. Geese sit down again, but this time no sleeping; their heads are up, they're alert"*<sup>51</sup>.

Negotiations in shared spaces require effective communication of intentions, desires, and dissent as, in coming together, individuals "exercise creativity in transcending their species-specific immersions and forming interspecies associations and bonds"<sup>52</sup>. In being with the residents, one

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<sup>48</sup> RW, fieldnotes, April 28

<sup>49</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 25

<sup>50</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 28

<sup>51</sup> CB, fieldnotes, April 28

<sup>52</sup> Lestel *et al.*, 'Phenomenology of animal life', 135

can feel the subtle affective shifts, as a calm sense of peace gives way, temporarily, to curiosity, surprise, or sudden confrontation. These observations of everyday embodied interactions provide glimpses into what it means to dwell together in multispecies community.

As residents participate in interactions that cross species divides, experiences, alliances, and identities emerge performatively, enacted through embodied relations that, at times, produce surprising configurations. Some individuals, including several of the turkeys, transgress expected behaviours through interspecific expressions of desire:

*[Shadow] walked right up to Paula, jostling her. Paula didn't move, she stayed crouching down. Shadow started lipping at her back, then pulling at the feathers near her left wing. She still didn't move or protest. Shadow mouthed at the feathers at the back of Paula's head/ neck, and Kathy shooed her away from doing that. Cheryl and Kathy said Paula was doing that because it was mating season – the posture of crouching/ hunkering down, wings slightly spread to the sides is presenting. She was presenting to Shadow, and apparently to [cows] Scotty and Coco earlier.<sup>53</sup>*

Paula was not the only turkey to exhibit such unlikely performances, as, on several occasions, human-oriented Fabio milled amongst us, displaying in an effort to capture our attentions. But boundaries are also policed, as certain social proclivities transgress the sensibilities of other residents:

*[alpaca] Domino loves the pig. Valkyrie only lets Domino touch her; this makes Avalon angry, he's the 'disapproving father' and will break them up when he sees it.<sup>54</sup>*

According to the patriarch Avalon, affection for pigs, or perhaps Valkyrie in particular, is an inappropriate performance of alpaca—a line which requires discipline to maintain in the case of his son.

It is common practice in many sanctuaries to separate residents spatially along species lines<sup>55</sup>, a move revealing an underlying essentialism in assumptions about behaviours and preferences for intra-specific sociality. Along with the accounts above, our experiences with Shadow in particular trouble these assumptions, illustrating what is lost when the potentials for

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<sup>53</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 27

<sup>54</sup> LVP fieldnotes, April 28, from Kevin

<sup>55</sup> Donaldson and Kymlicka, 'Farmed animal sanctuaries'

animals to cultivate meaning within a more spacious possible community are foreclosed. Upon arrival in The Commons our first day, eager and unsure what to expect, we were greeted by a young sheep:

*Shadow followed us around, galloping along the trail as part of the group (playful/joyful), kicking up heels, prancing.<sup>56</sup>*

We learned that Shadow rarely spends time with her fellow sheep, preferring to associate with members of many other species rather than integrating with the flock. VINE care provider Kevin reflected that Shadow is naive in a beautiful way: a universal individual who socializes with everyone rather than being part of any particular ‘clique’. She has particularly close associations with the three alpaca residents, which has caused her to be referred to by her human friends as an ‘alpeep’:

*she hangs out mostly with alpaca Max (with the brown head); he sticks with her often, checks out where she is, looking after her is his ‘job’; (while we were standing with Shadow and Kathy was explaining about Max, she pointed and we could see him down the hill ~100 feet away lying down, but craning his head up and moving it side to side, obviously keeping an eye on us) he came up near us while she was with us; later they were both around the left side of the barn<sup>57</sup>.*

These social relations create complications, impacting decisions pertaining to Shadow’s spatial access:

*Shadow still gets stalled at night next to Valkyrie the pig; they’re worried that she’s not part of the flock enough to trust to keep her out, that she will be protected if something happens... so she is fed and stalled each night; her and Valkyrie also hang around together outside; both are “outsiders” so connect.<sup>58</sup>*

In enacting her unique identity—in becoming ‘alpeep’—Shadow is excluded from certain privileges of the sheep community; namely safety in numbers and protection against the threat of predators. But along with exclusion comes opportunity. A universal individual, not limited to one group, the social world Shadow has cultivated includes time spent with cows, an outsider’s camaraderie with pig Valkyrie, and a close friendship with alpaca Max. Viewing species

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<sup>56</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 25

<sup>57</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 26

<sup>58</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 26, from Kathy

relations as performative challenges essentialist notions of genetically predetermined behaviours and associations, rather foregrounding the “relational emergence of animal identity and experience”<sup>59</sup>. Within such a view, co-shaped ‘Ethea’ reflect processes of “differential biosocial becomings”<sup>60</sup>, replete with meaning.

Negotiating these relations requires ongoing labours of communication and can be thought of as a process of ‘enskilment’, representing “the embodiment of capacities of awareness and response by environmentally situated agents”<sup>61</sup>. Approaching animals’ practices through the frame of enskilment gives us a more nuanced view of multispecies sociality, wherein asking questions about animals’ knowledges can foreground individuality and experience, overcoming the tendency to generalize behaviours and capacities based on species membership<sup>62</sup>. At VINE, newcomers from a variety of backgrounds become initiated into the practices of multispecies dwelling by learning from other residents: “*Over time, cows learn from other cows not to run in the barn*”<sup>63</sup>; “*cows and sheep seem to quickly look to others for the norm*”<sup>64</sup>. This process of social enskilment is not unique to mammalian residents. During our second day at VINE, the sanctuary was joined by 35 new chickens, rescued from intensive confinement. We assisted in welcoming them to ‘Wayne’s World’, a sizeable enclosure with a coop, a spreading cedar in one corner, and a number of galliforme and anseriforme residents. We witnessed their first tentative steps on soil and grass, their first experience of wind ruffling feathers,

*amazed at how calmly and quickly they started wandering around and pecking at the ground when [we] scattered feed... [they] didn’t seem to mind at all about the other chickens, roosters, ducks, and turkeys wandering amongst them (and humans)...it took a while (over 20 minutes) for them to figure out how to drink at water bucket with cylinder; they had only drunk from nipple water dispensers before. A chicken who was already there (resident) was drinking; they said residents will teach newcomers how to drink;*

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<sup>59</sup> Hovorka, ‘Feminism and animals’, 7

<sup>60</sup> van Dooren and Rose, ‘Lively ethnography’, 81

<sup>61</sup> Ingold, *Perception of the environment*, 5

<sup>62</sup> Barua and Sinha, ‘Animating the urban’

<sup>63</sup> WK, fieldnotes, April 30

<sup>64</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 26, from pattrice

*around 20 minutes later Agnes saw one drink, then a few minutes after there were [many].*<sup>65</sup>

The next day, a few of us brought them leafy greens:

*We started dropping piles, but they got spooked and walked briskly to congregate under a tree at the back corner... we worried that while a few of the braver hens had come out from under the tree to investigate the greens, most of them were still hanging back in a group... Cheryl said they may have not known what to do, never having foraged for greens before. She said the older residents would teach them, and that Fabio was a good teacher.*<sup>66</sup>

Aside from gaining knowledges necessary for one's own livelihood, there are processes at work behind becoming enskiled in specific social roles. Roosters perform essential work in ensuring the safety of community-members, especially against avian predators:

*when you see them being vigilant, on the lookout for hawks and other predators, you see the purpose of their aggression, you see that it's rooted in compassion.*<sup>67</sup>

Accurate warnings are more than instinctual drives, as individuals' abilities to discern possible threats improve with time and experience:

*A rooster was giving a loud alarm call and Cheryl said he was silly, it was a raven not a hawk. She said it was amazing they could tell the difference between turkey vultures and hawks, when she couldn't without her glasses. But sometimes they get fooled into thinking a raven is a hawk, especially the young roosters. (she also said sometimes depending on the angle of the sun the roosters, especially young ones, will mistake pigeons flying into the barn for hawks).*<sup>68</sup>

This emphasis on the fallibility of young roosters' judgement highlights that the proficiency of these birds as 'messengers' and 'bearers of intelligence'<sup>69</sup> requires a semiotic enskilment:

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<sup>65</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 26

<sup>66</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 27

<sup>67</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 28, from Kevin

<sup>68</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 27

<sup>69</sup> Abram, 'Discourse of the birds', 273

becoming attuned, over time, as one learns to distinguish signs, shapes, and meanings through situated engagements in a lived environment<sup>70</sup>.

Cohabitations are negotiated through everyday embodied interactions and communications, as “it is through the activities of the embodied mind (or enminded body) that social relationships are formed and reformed”<sup>71</sup>. These are not always amicable, but emerge as moments of peace or commotion, curiosity or confrontation. Just as social dynamics are not fixed in time or space, so too do individual identities and relations emerge performatively, as one becomes guardian or beloved, sheep or alpaca. These negotiations entwine with roles and livelihood practices, and are not pre-given, or accidental, but take shape through processes of enskilment, wherein animals’ knowledges reflect processes of becoming proficient foragers, communicators, and community-members, over time. Through these complex and diverse social relations, we can see the ways in which VINE’s animal residents cultivate meaning and co-shape rich shared worlds.

The last two sections have endeavoured to articulate some of the ways in which we can acknowledge animals as inhabiting a world of meaning, counter to prevailing visions which have positioned them as ‘poor in world’. We contend that attending to the meaning-making practices which underlie both negotiations of shared sociality and the inhabitation of a storied landscape opens up possibilities for cultivating new understandings of what it means to dwell with animal-Others in multispecies community. But how can we develop an understanding of multispecies community which both preserves animals’ radical alterity and refuses utopic visions of co-flourishing based on predefined characteristics rooted in human experience?

### **Towards a Conception of Multispecies Community: Being-With Animal-Others**

The question of “being-with” (*Mitsein*) is one that is fraught with conceptual difficulties when it comes to our relationship with animals. Traditional conceptions of community have not only been hostile to the inclusion of animals, but they have, in large part, been based on an untenable

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<sup>70</sup> Ingold, *Perception of the environment*

<sup>71</sup> Ingold, *Perception of the environment*, 171

dichotomy which has the exclusion of animals from the social lifeworld as its founding gesture.<sup>72</sup> Even in cases in which animals have been recognized as possessing a “world,” they have been considered “poor in world” or as navigating a “self-centered world.”<sup>73</sup> While these conceptions are certainly an improvement over the view of animals as “worldless,” their main function has been to reinforce the exclusion of animals from the social lifeworld in more sophisticated terms or to reinscribe animals within a hierarchical order at a lower stage of development or history. Complicating matters further, the dissolution of all communal bonds<sup>74</sup>, and the reification of meaning-making practices achieved by capitalism only exacerbates the ruthless instrumentalization of animals in the service of production.

Faced with the Scylla of exclusionary and hierarchical forms of community on one hand and the Charybdis of asymbolic capitalist exploitation on the other, the problem as we see it is one of identifying the conditions for the emergence of more-than-human communities within shared topographies of becoming. So far we have argued that both in the richness of their social relations and their storied experiences, the animals at VINE find themselves *in medias res*, always engaged with a world that continually comes into being around them and whose manifold constituents take on significance through their incorporation into the animals’ life activity. In what follows we argue that, in non-alienated form, these meaning-making practices make possible a certain kind of multispecies community and, as long as this emergent community does not elide the alterity of animal-Others, it prefigures a shared world of meaning, one that is as unstructured and unsettling as it is promising.

### ***Meaning-Making Practices: Community as Surplus***

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<sup>72</sup> The paradigmatic example of this conception is the rational community. For Kant, membership in the Kingdom of Ends is based on the absolute worth of rational nature as an end in itself (*G* 4:429). Everything, for Kant, “has either a **price**, or a **dignity**” (*G* 4:434). That which has a “*market price*” admits of equivalence (and is therefore fungible), whereas what has dignity, “is elevated above any price, and hence allows of no equivalence”: it cannot be measured against, or replaced with, something else “without...violating its sanctity” (*G* 4:434-5). Kant equates dignity with personality: “Thus morality and humanity, in so far as it is capable of morality, is that which alone has dignity [*Würde*]” (*G* 4:435). This consigns animals to the realm of price (*Preis*). Kant is notoriously clear in this regard: nonrational animals are *things*, subject to price, which exist as means for the fulfillment of our discretionary ends (“CBHH” 8:114; *G* 4:428; *VA* 7:127; *VE* 27:458-9).

<sup>73</sup> See for example Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*.

<sup>74</sup> Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 475-476.

In his discussion of dwelling, Ingold notes that the etymology of the German word “to build,” *bauen*, has its origins in the Old English and High German *buan*, meaning “to dwell.” The word “neighbour,” i.e., one who dwells nearby, retains this meaning, but *buan* refers to the more expansive idea of living one’s life on earth. Thus, the two meanings of *buaen*—to cultivate and to construct—were originally subsumed under the notion of dwelling. Ingold holds that, with time, the provenance of *bauen* is lost, and the word comes to be reserved exclusively for cultivation and construction: “Having forgotten how the latter activities are grounded in dwelling, modern thought then *rediscovers* dwelling as the occupation of a world already built”<sup>75</sup>.

This has important implications for our understanding of multispecies community. Community is to be located in the “dwelt in world.” A conception of community which is constructed or built around specific characteristics (e.g., a language or conceptual framework) that individuals share is one that necessarily occludes the common lifeworld in which we dwell, since it “rediscovers” dwelling in a dichotomized world, which reinforces rather than challenges the human/animal distinction. By contrast, the dwelling in community is a community in dwelling—it is a community that emerges as an outgrowth of meaning-making practices: attunement, emplacement, enskillment, and narrative performativity. That is, the singular plural “I dwell, you dwell” is always a community-in-becoming. Unimpeded, it overflows its constituents, in the form of an “excess” or “surplus” of the non-alienated life activity of animals.

If, however, these meaning-making practices are alienated (i.e., distorted or impeded),<sup>76</sup> as they are for most domesticated animals whose physical and affective labour are harnessed for human ends, the possibility of an emergent community is foreclosed. If, on the other hand, there are conditions in which meaning-making practices are allowed to flourish in non-alienated form, then we can speak of “fertile sites” that are more conducive to the emergence of community, such as VINE.

### ***The Enigma of Desire: Community as Impossibility***

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<sup>75</sup> Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*, 185

<sup>76</sup> Bachour, “Alienation and Animal Labour”

In navigating this emergent community, a tension arises between our desire for recognition and the impossibility of locating our place in the desire of the animal-Other (and vice versa). In spite of our conscious disavowal, this tension resonates throughout our fieldnotes in the question: “What does the animal-Other want from me?”

One of Lacan’s central insights is that “man’s [sic] desire is the Other’s desire”<sup>77</sup>. That is, the subject desires insofar as it experiences the Other as the site of an impenetrable or opaque desire. The subject cannot say what the Other’s desire is or how they appear in the desire of the Other. The Other not only addresses us with an enigmatic desire; it also confronts us with the fact that we do not know what we really desire, with the enigma of our own desire. Lacan took this to be a function of language, but in a multispecies community, the “enigma of desire,” as we shall see, is equally operative, if not more pronounced. Nor is discourse with the Other, as Alfonso Lingis reminds us, reducible to speech; it is first and foremost a process of “expos[ing] oneself to the other, the outsider...the alien...the victims and the excluded...the mad, the tortured, and the birds and the frogs. One enters into a conversation in order to become an other for the other”<sup>78</sup>. In what follows we look at three illustrations of this thesis from our time at VINE in the hopes of demonstrating that one of the conditions of emergent multispecies community is, paradoxically, the impossibility of community understood as the refusal to elide the alterity of the animal-Other.

*Greetings:* Upon our arrival at the sanctuary, we were cautious in approaching the animal residents and were met with many enthusiastic and warm greetings initiated by them. Nevertheless, our circumspection also bespoke an underlying ambiguity. Did a greeting by an animal resident indicate that we were welcome, cautiously welcome, a matter of curiosity, or indifference? Did the lack of a greeting indicate the opposite? What constituted a greeting to begin with? The field notes and reflections are filled with statements such as “*Many residents seemed to ignore us completely...Many others watched us (wary? Mildly curious? Bemused?) but did not approach. Most of the animals fall into this category. Do any of these responses constitute greeting?*”<sup>79</sup>. A similar uncertainty attended “non-greetings”:

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<sup>77</sup> Lacan, *Écrits*, 98, 181, 268, 279, 343, 693

<sup>78</sup> Lingis, 1994, 87-88

<sup>79</sup> SD, “Reflections” 1

*When the emus carefully monitored our approach each day, emitting their raptor-like vocalizations, was this a kind of watchful non-greeting? Or a kind of warning-greeting? ... When some of the cows in the upper sanctuary kept an eye on us, but none approached us, was this also a kind of watchful non-greeting? ... Were we simply projecting this lack of interest in us? (Assuming it to be the case because none of the cows approached us?) With the many animals who seemed not to greet us, is this because we simply failed to pick up on certain signals?*<sup>80</sup>

As researchers, a certain wariness with regard to interpretation is to be expected, especially in a multispecies environment, but this heightened cautiousness, we claim, is not reducible to a code of ethics. To greet another is to lay oneself open to the Other: “To address a...greeting to another is to expose one’s ignorance, one’s lacks, and one’s destitution...[it] is to appeal to assistance to one non-symmetrical with oneself”<sup>81</sup>. What accounts for this radical “asymmetry”? To the enigma of the desire of the animal-Other we can only respond with our own enigmatic desire (and vice versa), since our only assurance of meaning is a signifier that is always lacking. What provokes anxiety is the suspicion that the desire of the Other does not recognize us or, if it does, it recognizes us inadequately. Hence the desire of the Other always “puts me into question, interrogates me at the very root of my being”<sup>82</sup>.

*Human-Animal Interactions:* Our inability to determine an animal’s intentions and the tendency for own conceptions and fears to colour our interpretations of our encounters meant that they remained intractably ambiguous.

When one of us (LVP) was approached by Maddox, a large, horned male cow, my bodily vulnerability stemming from my disability caused me to feel “apprehensive,” “cautious,” and “nervous”<sup>83</sup>. I reflected that I “*need to be aware...that my fear or wariness...is probably going to be putting out a different energy to the animals than someone who is very comfortable and not afraid of that interaction*”<sup>84</sup>. Thus,

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<sup>80</sup> SD, “Reflections” 1

<sup>81</sup> Lingis, 1994, 87

<sup>82</sup> Salecl, 2004, 25

<sup>83</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 25

<sup>84</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 25

*I really did, in the moment of being afraid, try to exude calm, and I just looked at him calmly and tried not to feel nervous, and it was fine, and he didn't approach more, he came within a few inches but no closer. And so whether he sensed my apprehension or not I'm not sure...*<sup>85</sup>

Of course, a degree of doubt is natural, especially upon first encountering an animal, but what is important to highlight is that the nature of the encounter, even retrospectively, remains largely opaque: What did Maddox want? Did he sense my apprehension and consequently change his mind? Did my nervousness colour my interpretation of the encounter? Reflecting on another incident with an Emu named Erhardt in which what the group initially perceived as a sign of aggression or hostility turned out to be one of hunger, I (LVP) conclude:

*my interpretation of the behaviour was based entirely on what I was being told, and my mind was fitting what I was seeing to what I was expecting. So in this way I feel like empirical observations are very limited and very dependent upon being provided with correct information to interpret.*<sup>86</sup>

What does this disquiet with empirical observation point to? We do not mean to suggest that researchers can never arrive at empirically-informed insights into an animal's behaviour or that testimony cannot furnish us with an understanding of their motivations, but rather that there is always an impenetrable "remainder"; that behind the animal, even more so than the human, there always lurks a traumatic kernel, an unfathomable Otherness which we can never fully apprehend.

*Human-Animal Relationships:* During our visit to the sanctuary, one of us (OB) formed a strong bond with Hypatia, a "friendly brown turkey who keeps following Omar around"<sup>87</sup>. Even in our initial description of Hypatia, as we learned to tell her apart from the other turkeys, the language she inspired borders on the lyrical:

*[We] were learning to distinguish Hypatia from Cleopatra, carefully noting their unique features: Cleopatra's darker red (wattle/ dewlap) versus Hypatia's lighter pink; the way Cleopatra tended to stand with wings slightly spread/ fanned, with tips nearly touching the ground, whereas Hypatia tended to stand with wings tucked more tightly against her*

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<sup>85</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 25

<sup>86</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 25

<sup>87</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 28

*sides. Hypatia also had more/ larger light pink (caruncles) around her head and neck. While making these observations I noted the fine hairs covering the (snood) on her head, reminding me of a sundew flower, glinting in the sunlight. And just as I was observing her closely, I didn't lose sight of the fact that she was observing me back just as closely.*<sup>88</sup>

After the first preliminary visits to the sanctuary, I (OB) found myself spending the days almost exclusively with Hypatia. She would follow me around tirelessly as I walked by the barn or helped with the installation of a fence and sit beside me for long stretches of time in the central pasture as the midday sun warmed our bodies. My notes from the time reflect this languorous mien: *"Her features are not so stern / when your beloved / meets the vernal breeze / with half-closed eyes"*<sup>89</sup>. At times she would rest her body against mine so closely, I could feel her breathing: *"She presses the soft swell of her body / against your thigh / her grey feathers shimmering / beneath your fingertips"*<sup>90</sup>.

What did it all mean? Did Hypatia share my fondness for our budding friendship? Was it a friendship to begin with? Was the poetic language with its amorous undertones a matter of irony or jest, playful, albeit not wholly insincere? Or did it point to an instantiation of *Mitsein*, giving rise to a new communal subject? For one, the boundaries were by no means clear:

*Hypatia came back repeatedly to see Omar. She would stand alongside him, at one point almost partially on his leg (he was sitting on the ground). He was stroking her and she closed her eyes partially, contentedly. She was doing a snapping/clicking with her beak (not sure if it was because she just ate or if she is communicating with us). She perked up, and got very curious, standing tall and eyeing Omar, then pecked at his tooth. He had to then establish firmer boundaries with her.*<sup>91</sup>

There were also reasons to doubt that Hypatia's actions constituted a friendship. Kevin mentioned that *"the three new turkeys are very affectionate; they tend to like human men more than women"*<sup>92</sup>. In fact, Hypatia tended to divide her time between myself and another male

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<sup>88</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 28

<sup>89</sup> OB, "Epigrams" 4

<sup>90</sup> OB, "Epigrams" 4

<sup>91</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 28

<sup>92</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 27

researcher, resulting in some quips about our mutual jealousy. In addition, patrice reminded the group that it was the turkeys' mating season and a number of the researchers had witnessed them "presenting" to different animal and human residents/visitors.

Could Hypatia's putative affections be reduced to mere biological instincts and drives? Although this is not our view, we also cannot rule out this possibility with certainty. These doubts are reflected in the researcher's notes: "*Sitting beside her in the sun-dappled field / your hand outstretched / grazing her neck / in quiet supplication*"<sup>93</sup>—in quiet supplication for what? For a community that "*happens to us*—question, waiting, event..."<sup>94</sup>.

The fundamental question of desire in a multispecies context is not "What do we want?" but "What do animal-Others want from us? What do they see in us? What are we for them?" The animals' desire not only hystericizes us in its radical Otherness, but it is also an enigma for the animals themselves. If this is correct, the temptation to be resisted is the ethical domestication of the animal-Other, the reduction of the animal-Other to our mirror-image. Thus, we should be wary of conceptions of community that elide the radical Otherness of animals and reduce them to the totality of the Same.

We discover the possibility of community when, confronted with the desire of the Other, we experience the *impossibility* of communion, since we come face to face with that which cannot be appropriated, represented, or subsumed. It is precisely because we do not recognize ourselves in the desire of the Other that this radical alterity, by calling us outside ourselves, inaugurates the possibility of community.

### ***Two Illustrations of Emergent Community***

If utopic conceptions of co-flourishing based on predefined characteristics are to be avoided, what kind of community emerges in the form of a surplus when complex meaning-making practices are allowed to flourish, and we remain fully responsive to the alterity of animal-Others? We adduce two illustrations of how VINE provides the opportunity for the emergence of a

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<sup>93</sup> OB, "Epigrams" 4

<sup>94</sup> Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, 11

multispecies community that occurs spontaneously, manifesting itself in “the possibility—beyond any utilitarian gain—of *being-together* that [gives] back to all the right to equality in fraternity [sic]”<sup>95</sup>, and admits of an uncanny innocence in the first example, and a corrupting exuberance of life in the second.

On our first day at the sanctuary, patrice was giving us a tour of the lower sanctuary when it began to rain. To escape the torrent, we stepped inside a large chicken coop as she continued relaying the history of VINE. Slowly, as if summoned by the dulcet pitter-patter, the chickens began to fill the coop, huddling beside us, their bodies pressed artlessly against ours: “*Caught in the downpour / the history of the sanctuary / you take refuge among the chickens*”<sup>96</sup>. We had just arrived at the sanctuary, and yet we were overcome with a sense of community, nebulous and ineffable, tinged with a mournful innocence, huddled together, however briefly, taking shelter from the rain.

A testament to the fact that community can emerge as a “project without a project”<sup>97</sup> from a constellation of differing circumstances is “Hannaford Day,” which takes place weekly:

*[A]fter lunch it was ‘Hannaford Day’ where in the morning [the store] dropped off a truck of produce they couldn’t sell. I hadn’t noticed but others said the residents had known that it was Hannaford Day and knew there were bins in the fenced area around the house and what that means. When we came back after lunch we spent around 45 minutes distributing food to the animals. We threw whole potatoes, zucchini, oranges, cauliflower, tomatoes, etc. as well as opening and dumping containers of cut fruits and veggies (cantaloupe, watermelon, carrots, celery).*<sup>98</sup>

Here, the notion of an emergent community assumes the form of a corrupting exuberance of life: Buffeted by the heedless rain, the animals gathered around the fenced area, with cows at the vanguard as we threw fruits and vegetables, reckless hands extending oversized crops, their

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<sup>95</sup> Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, 29-31

<sup>96</sup> OB, “Epigrams” 3

<sup>97</sup> Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, 29-31. See also Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*; Agamben, *The Coming Community*; and Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*.

<sup>98</sup> LVP, fieldnotes, April 27

tongues outstretched, long and coiling, necks straining over the makeshift fence, keeping an eye out for their favourite repasts, “*a freegan banquet / the animal-revellers prefer the sweet fruits / tongues as coarse as sandpaper*”<sup>99</sup>, smaller animals weaving in between hooves and feet, miraculously unharmed, chickens under tables collecting rinds, ducks darting beneath the trellis, sheep joining the fray, alpacas looking on from a distance, the rain pouring down, peals of laughter and commentary on which fruits are prized above all others, somnambulant bodies moving back and forth, from the containers to the fence, from the fence to the containers, in the thrall of a primordial rhapsody, animals traversing the length of the enclosure in search of palatable delight, maneuvering to and fro, jostling, exchanging positions, a Dionysian kineticism, “*maenads dancing in the rain / a corybantic animal joy*”<sup>100</sup>, the aftermath of the bacchanalian frenzy, a spectacular fugue, empty containers, heaving bulks, a soporific calm, the soft earth, animals milling about, stealth foragers, a gentle mizzle, unpopular victuals left untouched, buried in the mud, muscles aching, the crowd dispersing, acedia, hebetude, languor, “*the ground strewn with half-eaten food / a pleasurable exhaustion settles over the participants*”<sup>101</sup>.

Excess, frenzy, expenditure—community.

### **Multispecies Worldings beyond Sanctuaries?**

Our research and reflections above have been limited to VINE, which is only one multispecies community. Like the limits and boundaries of VINE, multispecies community remains undefinable. The permeable boundaries here engender interactions and relations between its permanent residents and wild animal-Others who visit or live nearby, alluding to communities yet to come or yet to be understood. If the fertile conditions at VINE that continuously facilitate the growth and emergence of complex intra- and interspecies stories and relations are always already in existence everywhere in our shared worlds, and fluctuating in their resistance against dominant human conceptions and control over the lives of animal-Others, then the implications of the worldings we have examined at VINE should be at once unfixed, unsettling, and promising.

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<sup>99</sup> OB, “Epigrams” 4

<sup>100</sup> OB, “Epigrams” 4

<sup>101</sup> OB, “Epigrams” 4

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