

Introduction

The Root of It All

THEORY OF LITERATURE AND LIFE

This book is about stories. We live with these stories. We tell them to our children and revisit them as we grow and accumulate experience, sometimes deriving new sense out of them. Our stories explain to us where we came from and nudge us towards a future they have imagined. They tell us about the world and inspire us to love it, but also to conquer it. They incite us to dream, encouraging us to make choices, and thus we live these stories. But throughout our lives, we continue to think of even the most fundamental stories of our culture that narrate our existence as simply tales, often forgetting that what we consider to be unquestionable truths in sacred texts or incontestable facts in science are part of a larger story that shares its epistemological foundation with fiction and legends and, concurrently, with science and civilization.¹ Conglomerations of these, sometimes contradictory, tales constitute our narrative.

To understand the postulates in the story of humanity and the world that we, often unconsciously, convey through both science and fiction, a story whose principles we have come to embody, we must venture beyond the analysis of words in written and oral texts or of images and representations in visual arts. Such analysis requires a multidisciplinary approach. Therefore, this book incorporates a range of disciplines, among them ethology, philosophy, anarchist studies, and literary theory, and offers a comparative anthropological reading of the underlying premises that drive the material expression of the narratives of civilization and wilderness.

Our encounter with stories begins at birth. The French historian Philippe Ariès (1962) argued that before the 18th century, particularly during the Middle Ages, there was no distinct children's culture in Europe. According to him, the contemporary (European and Eurocentric) construct of childhood was conceived amongst the elite classes after the 15th century and only in the 20th has it become the norm among the upper and lower classes and exported globally. Prior to this development, says Ariès, children participated in adult culture and were exposed to complex representations of civilized reality and to philosophical, anthropological, and sociological musings. Of course, the underlying assumption leaves out non-European literature and dismisses the role of oral literature preceding the European Middle Ages. Critics of Ariès, however, point out that even if there were

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no distinctly recognizable children's culture at the time, it does not mean that adults did not sing or tell stories and poems to their children in a form that was specifically adapted to their perceptions of children's needs. Most important, as this book aims to demonstrate, the underlying premises of civilization imbue the general culture as well as children's literature and, along with the socio-economic realities of the civilized paradigm, structure children's experiences non-uniformly across the globe.

Archaeological evidence points to the fact that literacy, education, and a specialized children's culture have always been characteristic features of civilized societies. I discuss these problems of civilization below. In the meantime, it is important to note that the earliest records of literacy come from Mesopotamia and are around 7,000 years old. According to Gillian Adams (1986), the earliest texts addressed specifically to children are Mesopotamian, written in the Sumer language and dating around 2,000 years. Another example of early extant stories that were expressly addressed to children were the *Pañcatantra* fables, written in Sanskrit and also dating at least 2,000 years.

But regardless of whether stories are tailored specifically to the perceived needs of the child, thereby fashioning those needs, or whether children are immersed in the general adult culture as soon as they are born, a culture in which children grow up is in fact (also) children's culture. For it provides the epistemological foundation of the adult that the child becomes. At the same time, engaging with children in a playful, imaginative, and empathetic manner has the potential to allow the adults to reimagine a state prior to our domestication. From this perspective, because children's literature appeals both to the "wild child inside" and to the "civilizing project" that domesticates the child into a future adult who will fill a niche in the hierarchy of "human resources", it offers an interesting, if not complicated, case study and, in this book, plays the role of an anthropological informant in the field.

The aim of this book is not only to bridge disciplines but also to speak to audiences with a wide range of backgrounds and interests. It is, therefore, important to begin by defining some of the most critical and problematic terms at the root of my inquiry, namely "culture", "wildness", "wilderness", "civilization", and "colonization". Since the semiotic aspect of the English word "term" entails both the time limitations and other pressures and conditions that apply to those who submit to language, Chapter One examines the problem of language in-depth. Therefore, before delving into the analysis of narratives and "informants", this introduction lays down the problems posed by these terms and examines the way in which they inform the metanarrative that frames our imagination, understanding, and culture.

ON CULTURE

"Culture" is the sum of practices, concepts, means of subsistence, and relationships to the environment.² All living beings devise cultural strategies

for subsistence that impact their socio-environmental economies and relationships, thereby affecting the world. It is through this effect that cultures manifest themselves. Evidently, since we exist within the environment of our biosystems, our cultural strategies are necessarily symbiotic, with some groups choosing mutualistic relationships that benefit life, ultimately leading to diversity, while others adhere to commensalistic socio-environmental economies that benefit one party but leave the other unaffected. There are also amensalistic systems in which one party hurts others but remains unaffected by that relationship either way. Still, there are those who choose parasitic socio-environmental paradigms to benefit one group at the expense of others.³

Most cultures, including viruses and bacteria, are mutualistic because, if left unchecked and untreated, commensalistic and amensalistic economies, and particularly the parasitic ones, lead to the depletion of the host system and, such as in the case of cancer, to the demise of the parasitic organism itself, which tries to colonize new territories and dies when its environment collapses. As the next section discusses, the history of wilderness demonstrates that the prevalent symbiotic systems on earth have been mutualistic relationships, including human animal cultures. This changed drastically, however, after the advent of Agricultural Civilization.

Therefore, for the purposes of understanding what drives these cultural choices and their impact on our knowledge and environment, I propose to probe beyond the superficial differences between cultures (be they human or other animals') and examine the principles on which they stand. Namely, this book explores the ontological premises of our story and the principles of life with the aim of examining how they inform our knowledge and the imaginary in children's literature, thereby influencing our relationship to the world.

ON WILDNESS

Throughout the book, the term "wildness" refers to the character of untamed beings whose purpose for existence is not defined by a utilitarian value, while "wilderness" denotes the spatial dimension of existence that includes living and non-living elements sharing that space and time without infringing upon each other's purpose. *Wilderness* is, therefore, a cumulative topos of diversity, movement, and chaos, while *wildness* is a characteristic that refers to socio-environmental relationships.

The basic premise in the ontology of wildness translates into anarchy, where the *raison d'être* of everything and everyone – living or non-living, human or nonhuman, child or adult, male, female, intersexual, bisexual, or asexual, whatever the species, ethnicity, or race (all of which are important classifications for civilization only) – is simply to be and to enjoy being. In wilderness, the world exists for its own reasons, its space and time uncontrolled, solely its own, regardless of whether it was created by an external

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divine will or generated through its own exploded forces. Here every member of existence is an agent of her life, driven by desires that play into the cosmic harmony of plurality, not only within one's group or species but in the larger community of life and nonlife.

Chaos is the principle that guides wild relationships. This is a complex and dynamic system that consists of a variety of particles in motion and their relationships with the movement of others. Hence, wilderness is a place of constant improvisation (Darwin called it evolution), where interests, conflicts, and spontaneity are resolved through an unpredictable, yet harmonious, cosmic dance, the outcome of which is life on earth. This system supports the proliferation of diversity within the whole range of symbiotic relationships, including sporadic outbursts of human and other animal civilization.

Narratives of wilderness reflect this chaos. Therefore, they have no singular format or predictable outcome. They do not have a plot that necessarily leads to some (anthropocentric) conclusion and hence can host a multiplicity of voices and perspectives. Regardless of whether they appear in scientific works, folklore, fiction, religious literature, or children's books, narrative endeavours that question the civilized parameters capture deftly the complexity of the various cultural strategies. As indigenous lore shows, undomesticated knowledges portray the world, and everything in it, as existing for its own sake, *not* to be defined, confined, domesticated, known, and possessed. This fundamental premise of wildness *knows* the human animal as having been created or having evolved to be an insignificant speck yet, concomitantly, as vital a component of its biosystem as any other. Tove Jansson's Moomin books provide an excellent illustration of how wild children's stories can depict a world with the full spectrum of symbiotic relationships. There are also scientific texts that draw such connections.

For instance, in *The Lives of a Cell*, American biologist Lewis Thomas's (1974) scientific observations intertwine poetically with the cosmic vision of an artist. The book invites the reader to consider the larger picture: if single cells form larger organisms, then larger organisms together could be the constituents of the fabric of an even larger cosmic entity, such as our earth. By extension, if minute mitochondria and organelles make up our bodies, then these larger bodies in turn would constitute the mitochondria of our world. This is more than a metaphor, since we are interconnected with other forms of life and nonlife in an organic, spiritual, and literary way.⁴

In the scope of the universe, life is indeed a complex phenomenon, constantly changing and moving through time, space, and possibly other dimensions. To have successfully lived and flourished in the diversity of wilderness, communities of life and nonlife have had to rely on the intelligence of their members to know how to be in the world, how to collaborate with other living and non-living beings, and help life be. In other words, the wild stance for life requires mutuality, which needs self-regulation, the ability for autonomous learning, reciprocity, and intelligent adaptability to chaos.

According to the Russian anarchist naturalist Peter Kropotkin (2006), mutual aid is the principle by which life safeguards its health and diversity. He observes that in wilderness, happiness and kindness are the prevalent state, while struggle and competition are the secondary, even minor, regulating mechanisms of the self-ordering anarchy. Herbivores and frugivores have historically outnumbered predators, says Kropotkin, and, therefore, most beings in the wild die of old age and natural causes. This makes scavenging, rather than predation, the predominant and most viable socio-environmental culture for carnivores,⁵ while frugivore and herbivore gathering presents the most economically feasible culture of subsistence for the vast majority of species, including primates – the animal family to which the human animal belongs.

Life in wilderness demands multi-layered, complex intelligence that is rooted in empathy or the ability to understand what others experience. The wild have to know when to tune in and, therefore, must understand others – albeit different and existing for their own reasons – as connected to oneself. Intelligence acquired through presence and empathy allows the wild to develop both imagination (What is it like to be *not* me?) and knowledge rooted in the experience and reality of the world (What is life like for you, her, him, it, or them?). Such knowing occurs on many levels, including the physiological plane – the *body hexis* and DNA provide good examples of how our bodies store information.⁶

Thus, wildness yields a complex understanding of life as constantly changing, not to be captured or fixed by a static narrative, grammar, or formula. For, as the analysis of symbolic culture in Chapter One shows, reliance on generalizations in lieu of empathic presence erases the individual and the unique in our relationships and experience of the world. Symbols substitute the real, and formulae preclude the unexpected. But, instead of gaining control over the unknown, we become ignorant of the immediate, and this ignorance renders us vulnerable. The problems that symbols and formulae pose for understanding and relating to the world, however, do not make wildness antithetical to remembering and learning from the past. On the contrary, in order to thrive, wilderness needs memory as well as unmediated presence, in addition to movement (or nomadism) and adaptability to diversity and change. Chapter One discusses this confluence between civilization, literacy, and the loss of memory in-depth. In the meantime, in order to understand the implications of these connections for the civilized narrative, it is important to situate them in the context of the history of life.

Life has existed on earth for about four billion years with vertebrates inhabiting the planet for 535 million years and mammals appearing 230 million years ago (Lewin, 2005; Williams et al., 2010). Primates share about 30% of the timeline for the existence of mammals, that is, about 70 million years, with hominidae occupying 4.3% of primate history, namely, 10 million years. Even though anatomically modern humans have been making adaptive shifts and acquiring genetic mutations prior to their split from chimpanzees,

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the lineage *homo* made its appearance on the landscape of wilderness a mere two million years ago. And only then, more than a million and half years later, did archaic humans come to grace the world – about 300,000 or 400,000 BCE, while modern human animals or *Homo sapiens*, walk onto the landscape only 200,000 years ago.

In other words, human existence does not amount to even a fraction of a percent in the scope of the experience of life on earth,⁷ and throughout the course of the history of life, our world was thriving in wildness and diversity. Finally, 10,000 years ago, human civilization arises in the Middle East, leading us directly into the era of an unprecedented scope of species loss and an abrupt desertification of oceans and land. This era is referred to as the Holocene Extinction, or the age of anthropogenic destruction of life on earth, during which, today, “on average, a distinct species of plant or animal becomes extinct every 20 minutes” (University of Texas report, 2002).

The above figures demonstrate that in contrast to the billions of years on the *curriculum vitae* of wilderness, civilization has existed for an insignificant fraction of the experience of life on earth and a mere half of a percent of the history of the *homo* lineage; 10,000 years of civilization constitute 0.5% of human experience. Therefore, regardless of whether we consider that life on earth was sparked by divine will or by a geological and meteorological accident, palaeontological evidence suggests that there must have been little of it at the beginning and that it must have flourished the most before the advent of the Anthropocene, or the Age of Humanity, that self-congratulatory name the civilized human animals gave to the epoch that followed the highly destructive Agricultural Revolution.

Since humanity appears late on the scene, there was no (human) manager to interfere and oversee the proliferation and evolution of species for over 99.9% of the history of life on earth. This means that the various forms of life must have had the intelligence to tune into the chaos of cosmic conditions and to have understood how to thrive and render this planet viable. It is this flourishing that demonstrates the intelligence of beings; the older the species, the wiser it must be and the more co-operative with other forms of life and nonlife. Insects, bacteria, and grass, for instance, demonstrate this point aptly. Yet in spite of evidence to the contrary, the civilized narrative constructs wild life as dangerous and unviable while, the insignificant in the scope of the history of the world, civilized humanity as the epitome of life on earth. Most of our socio-economic and environmental problems today stem from these false assumptions about civilization and wilderness. And it is these assumptions that provide the underlying narrative in children’s books.

ON CIVILIZATION

Throughout the book, the term “civilization” refers to the social and material cultures that issue from a specific socio-environmental system, which in

human animals is legitimated by a perspective that sees the world as existing for a utilitarian purpose. In this view, all living and non-living beings are bound together in a predatory food chain, their reason for existence being to serve as a resource for someone else. This food chain is hierarchical rather than circular, with the human animal emerging as the top predator in this narrative.

The narrative of human predation is based on false analogy that amounts to wolves kill, bears fish, lions eat gazelles, and, therefore, humans can eat all and whomever they like. However, human primates are not lions, bears, or wolves; we are primates. Therefore, what lions, bears, wolves, or others might do has little, if anything, to do with human nature. We would be closer to truth by making the following comparisons: zebras eat grass; elephants get their proteins from plants; bonobos have the best lives and all they eat is fruit; the white-footed mouse loves flowers, berries, and seeds; hence, human animals have a sweet tooth and like to climb trees, since we are genetically closer to these nonhuman people than to carnivores.

The following figures challenge the narrative of the genetic nature of human predation. We share 99.4% of DNA identity at non-synonymous sites and 98.4% at synonymous sites with bonobos and chimps (Wildman et al., 2004). The variation among humans is ~ 99.5% of DNA. We also share 88% of identical gene pairs with mice, and 99% of the 30,000 genes in mice (which is an equivalent number of genes in human animals) have direct counterparts in humans (Gunter and Dhand, 2002). Only after pigs, cows, and other herbivores do we begin to approach a similarity to carnivores, namely, dogs at 84% of shared DNA.⁸

In spite of the evidence, however, the popular narrative highlights Palaeolithic hunting groups in an argument that carnivorousness made us human and led Palaeolithic hunters to adopt Agricultural Civilization and sedentism as a more efficient socio-economic system. Thus, most of the blame or credit (depending on which way one looks at the end result) for the rise of civilization has been placed on the Neolithic or Agricultural Revolution, which began with the domestication of emmer wheat in the Middle East around 17,000 B.P., followed by the domestication of dogs in Southeast Asia around 12,000 B.P. and around 11,000 B.P. in North America (Ellen in Ingold, 1997). These events constitute a revolution because they changed drastically the social fabric and, most important, human strategies for subsistence with serious repercussions for several aspects of life's experience on earth.

The first of these changes was a shift in human consciousness from a state of wildness – in which the human animal perceived its existence as one organism among a wide variety of others, whose purpose for existence was for their own sake and pleasure of being – to a civilized entity that is separate from other animals and rises above them, one that domesticates, owns, manages, consumes, and controls the lives and reproduction of resources: nonhuman people, crops, and later, through a division of labour, human animals as well. In other words, the shift in human consciousness

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was also a shift in human subsistence strategies, whereby some human animals reinvented their narrative to centre murder and predation and thereby institutionalize violence.

Evidently, the above is not intended to deny that animals kill in the wilderness. However, death in the wild is never a contained experience inscribed into a grammar of suffering or a system of murder. As mentioned in the section above, most herbivores die of old age and natural causes because predators are slower at reproduction, which explains why there have historically been fewer predators than prey. They sleep much longer hours than herbivores and frugivores (Capellini et al., 2008; Lesku et al., 2006; Berger and Phillips, 1988) and, therefore, hunt rarely, mostly catching the old or the sickly. Moreover, wild predators never focus solely on carnivorism. They also consume fruit and berries (Herrera, 1989; Hickey et al., 1999). Most important, when a bear eats a fish or a tiger captures an antelope, this act of killing does not stem from a socio-cultural grammar that defines *all* bears as owning the rights to fish's reproductive system or as *permanently* controlling the lives and consuming the flesh of every single fish. Ontologically and epistemologically, wild predators do not define prey as a totality of the experience of whole groups at all time.

In contrast, when human domestication constructs epistemological categories of "cattle", to take one example, such categorization reduces the experience of every single member of the "cattle" class to serving the human class as food for the duration of their entire lives, while those who are not useful to this system are exterminated. To maximize its resources, the human animal legitimates violence to force the reproduction of "cattle" women, robs them of their motherhood, and obliterates intimacy with members of their community. In wilderness, this community would include all the animal and plant species that are symbiotic members of the biosystem. Moreover, civilized epistemology imposes the category of prey on any future generations of cattle for the totality of the existence of the species on earth. This monocultural totalitarianism characterizes the agricultural practice and is critical to understanding the underlying premises and perspectives that inform the social and socio-environmental relationships in civilization.

In this respect, civilization is the sum of domesticated relationships with everything material and symbolic that issues from the labour and consumption of those categorized as resources and the (necessarily) unequal value for that labour, victimhood, and lives. Namely, the narrative values the needs of the owners and consumers while ignoring the suffering of the owned and consumed victims. The terms "civilization" and "domestication" are thus inter-related, with civilization being the contingent since it is the consequence of the ontology of domestication, which defines the *raison d'être* of creation in terms of predation. This ontology legitimates and naturalizes servitude, consumption, and murder. Having conceptualized *itself*⁹ as the ultimate predator at the top of the food chain, for whose appetite the world exists, the human animal has become aware of itself as different from, even alien to, the world.

It is debatable whether this shift in self-conceptualization, or consciousness, was a concomitant of the Agricultural Revolution or whether it was alienation that made the revolution possible, perhaps even necessitated it. In my book *Wild Children – Domesticated Dreams: Civilization and the Birth of Education* (2013), I examine the scientific evidence on primate diet and predatory practices, which indicates that the switch to carnivorism – and more precisely, to hunting, i.e. killing – might have been the requisite impetus for constructing a permanent structure of predation for human culture, subsequently developing a self-replicating system of domestication through narratives and education, whereas in this book I identify language as a tool of this alienation. The two aspects are not mutually exclusive. In any event, this awareness of difference and separatedness, coupled with a narrative that legitimates hierarchy, gave birth to humanism, which appears to have been the thrust needed to fuel the Agricultural Revolution.

This new socio-environmental culture required new narratives to articulate the humanist perspective. These narratives were built on civilized premises that defined the world in terms of resources, classifying living and non-living beings into categories. They thus embodied an epistemological system in which epistemological classes ultimately translated into socio-economic classes of those who owned, knew, and possessed agency and those who were owned, known, and exploited.

In our convoluted world, the extent of ownership and exploitation sometimes appears hazy, seemingly not committing to clear boundaries, with some members holding the status of prey while simultaneously participating in the predatory consumption of others. Specifically, human animals, who are being exploited as human resources or reproductive resources in a labour chain and who are isolated from the wealth they produce, often fail to see how their own status of prey is linked to the abuse of other classes of human and nonhuman prey to which they directly or indirectly contribute. This participation in humanism keeps most human and other animals exploited, consumed, and dispossessed. Inevitably then, humanistic paradigms struggle with several irresolvable problems. Since the institutions of civilization are rooted in speciesism, racism, sexism, and classism, then social injustice provides the foundation for the legislative bodies that regulate the (lack of) distribution of wealth and (lack of) access to knowledge and space, as well as the extent of personhood and agency permitted to its resources. This intersectionality works to solidify oppressive and discriminatory practices and the epistemological classification system on which this paradigm is built has serious material repercussions for whole classes of beings.

The most blatant manifestation of human alienation through identity and classification is the discipline of anthropology itself. Anthropology is the social understanding, as well as a social construct, of what is a human. Some of its questions examine how different human societies understand their origins, or what is the meaning of existence to us, or what are the

repercussions of our self-knowledge on the world – all of which amounts to the question of what is human culture.

As the name already suggests, anthropology is the study of only one species: the human primate. This singularity sets us apart as a particular group that is distinct from all the other animals who are lumped together in the disciplines of zoology and ethology. Even though the human animal is a primate, anthropology excludes all the other primates and simians. Yet civilized epistemology provides no equivalent category for them. Hence, there is no such discipline as “chimpanzology” or “orangutology”, for instance, dedicated to other members of our evolutionary family. The body of knowledge about other apes groups them all into the discipline of primatology, while the so-called “wise wise *man*” or the *Homo sapiens sapiens*, is accorded a separate category all for itself. In the same vein, palaeontology is the study of all animal remains, while palaeoanthropology is reserved for the human animal alone.

Constructing an epistemology of the world as divided into these separate and unequal disciplines thus sets humans apart from and above the rest of the world. Rooted in separation, this epistemology influences our dispositions and institutionalizes a specific (namely, anthropocentric) framework for our gaze. It allows us to see ourselves as the sole gazer upon the world and to view “nature” as something out there, different from us and hostile. From this perspective, wilderness exists to be tamed into a docile and pleasant (for us) landscape, and we go through life certain that nonlife is there to be exploited and the lives of others either disregarded or consumed. In this book, the term “nature” refers to the character of relations and dispositions, not to be confused with the common usage that stands for (domesticated) landscape.

This knowledge has further ramifications for the world, as epistemological classes in civilization translate into socio-economic classes that impose limitations on who is allowed access to space and sources of subsistence and to what extent. Differentiation is, therefore, not neutral but intended to legitimate a system of unequal power relations in which humanity constitutes a class of the ultimate and rightful – even legitimate – predators, whose superiority stems from possessing agency and power over resources. The rest of the dehumanized animals are then defined in terms of their utility for the human class of animals, with some characterized as beasts of burden, some constructed as food, and others defined as competition. Constructing whole classes of victims as “naturally” inferior to their oppressors legitimates the despite in which the oppressors hold those whom they dispossess of personhood and agency. Finally, the vicious circle closes as dispossession itself further legitimizes exploitation of the victims of oppression.

Ultimately, civilized classification sentences its resources to either life in civilization or death. This was the epistemological foundation that rationalized the enslavement of “human resources”. Specifically, Europeans referred to and depicted African people as “beasts” both in science and religion.¹⁰

For this humiliation and logic to be effective, the narrative had to first dehumanize nonhuman animals and classify them as nonhuman or “beastly” and different from “humans”.¹¹ Second, it had to appeal to the “knowledge” that anything that is not human exists for human purpose. This classification not only imposed a life sentence of slavery on the victims but extended to the future generations of that “class”, as they became forced to reproduce more of themselves for the purpose of free labour for “humans”.

Other categories, like “vermin”, “pest”, and “weed”, carry with them a death sentence for those human and other animals, as well as plants, who are perceived as competition. Thus, farmers and agricultural institutions, such as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), purposefully poison millions of animals and birds that are categorized as competition to agricultural produce (Wisniewski, 20 January 2011). For instance, “more than 4 million animals shot, poisoned, snared or trapped by the Department of Agriculture’s Wildlife Services in fiscal year 2013 included 75,326 coyotes, 866 bobcats, 528 river otters, 3,700 foxes, 12,186 prairie dogs, 973 red-tailed hawks, 419 black bears and at least three eagles, golden and bald”.¹²

This report, however, is limited to the murders of animal people that took place only in one fiscal year in the U.S. alone. It does not include the statistics from the rest of the civilized world or the Holocene Extinction. It also excludes wars between human animals, pollution, tolls of past and present slavery, or other perils of civilization, all of which were made possible by the basic premise in civilization that defines the world’s *raison d’être* in terms of value for civilized human animals.

The categories of pest and vermin apply to human resources and human competition with the same implications. For instance, Ukrainian nationalists refer to Ukrainian Russian speakers as pests, specifically as “Colorado Potato Beetles”, thereby bestowing upon themselves the moral right to exterminate, sometimes locking their opponents/compatriots in buildings and burning them alive.¹³ Similarly, in the early 1990s the Rwandan media referred to the Tutsi people as cockroaches, thereby instigating the Hutu to kill close to one million Tutsi (70% of the Tutsi population in Rwanda at the time) within a period of three months.¹⁴ This epistemological system provides an effective schema that can be applied to any relations in civilization, be the class marked by gender, species, religion, nationality, race, or ethnicity. Hence, terms such as “slut”, “swine”, “bitch”, “cattle”, *inter alia*, are used to reinforce the labour category to which an individual has been assigned and to legitimate the continued oppression of the classes. For instance, the word “slut” signals a class of pleasure resources and is used as a mechanism of control of women as a reproductive class.

In this respect, understanding civilization, domestication, and culture through an analysis of their underlying premises leads to existential and religious questions that incorporate not only ontological perspectives on relationships, society, and space but also a Marxist dimension. For, ultimately,

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any exploration of human narratives hearkens back to the question of life: What is life, how *do* we live it, and how *should* we live it ethically, materially, and existentially? In this sense, this book is also about civilization and wilderness as ontological conceptions of being that inform our experience, understanding, desires, and imagination and that influence the material world.

Besides the shift in human consciousness, several other important changes occurred during the Agricultural Revolution. On the physiological plane, compared to archaic *Homo sapiens*, anatomically modern humans have significantly lost their physical and cranial robusticity (Lewin, 2005). This occurred gradually at first and then dramatically after the Agricultural Revolution, between 10,000 and 5,000 years ago. It is noteworthy that this loss did not take place in all human populations. For instance, according to Lewin (*ibid*), Australian Aborigines, Patagonians, and Fuegians retained some robusticity in their skull and skeletal anatomy.

This decline in the physique of modern humans was accompanied by a significant reduction in brain size, where the human animal brain shrank from 1,740 cm³ to 1,300 cm³ (*ibid*), and deterioration in health, particularly of women, children, and older adults (Armelagos et al. [1991]; Fábrega [1997]). However, the civilized narrative about humanity and civilization ignores this information and suggests an implicit association of growth with success. By selecting favourable comparisons while neglecting those that challenge human superiority, it portrays humanity as a story of improvement.

For instance, a common graph depicts this improvement by comparing the average size of the human brain to smaller hominidae such as *Ramapithecus punjabicus*, *Australopithecus africanus*, *Australopithecus habilis*, and *Homo erectus*.¹⁵ These comparisons frequently omit the much larger brains of the Cro-Magnon and Neanderthals and when they do mention them, they rarely describe humans as inferior to other human and nonhuman groups, instead making the *Homo sapiens sapiens* appear superior to other human and nonhuman people. Thus, dolphins “may be” “almost” as smart as humans; the large brains of Neanderthals come with an encephalization quotient that tries to diminish their intelligence; and so forth. Here is an illustration of how this narrative skips such information and highlights the underlying premise of improved humans even when palaeoanthropologists found evidence that “the largest cranial capacity of any known hominin”, *H. neanderthalensis* skeleton found in Amud (present day Israel), had a cranial capacity of 1,740 cm³, that is to say, about 400 cm³ larger than modern humans (Shahack-Gross et al., 2008; p. 25) and that these people exhibited sensitivity, artistic expression, care for the wounded and the elderly, *inter alia*:

“Extant anthropoids exhibit an upward ‘grade shift’ in relative brain size compared to tarsiers and living strepsirrhines (104). A number of adaptive explanations have been proposed for this shift, including enhanced environmental mapping, dietary shifts, changes in the visual

system, changes in social structure, and enhanced domain – general cognition. Most of these proposals are bolstered by correlative distributions of brain size versus behavioural traits in living species. The emergence of a more detailed fossil record is beginning to serve as an important test of these hypotheses. For example, we now know that relative increases in brain size occurred independently in catarrhines and platyrrhines (8, 105, 106) and that stem anthropoids (e.g., *Simonsius*) and even stem catarrhines (*Aegyptopithecus*) and stem platyrrhines (*Chilecebus* and *Homunculus*) had brains broadly comparable in size to living strepsirrhines (105, 107, 108). Thus, the larger brains of living anthropoids evolved gradually and potentially could have been influenced by different selective factors in platyrrhines and catarrhines” (Williams et al., 2010).

I chose not to shorten the above paragraph by deleting the “unnecessary” phrases intentionally to avoid trimming – the very exercise I am critiquing here. The paragraph is, therefore, complete and speaks for itself. Here, phrases like “an upward ‘grade shift’” or “enhanced domain – general cognition” prompt us towards the “therefore” conclusion: “Thus, the larger brains of living anthropoids evolved gradually and potentially could have been influenced by different selective factors in platyrrhines and catarrhines”. These are all positive terms that suggest improvement. Attributing brain growth to enhancement due to “selective factors” creates the appearance that these are favourable characteristics for evolution towards “humanity” as an enhanced species.

The premise that humanity, particularly civilized humanity, is a vital, almost ineluctable, achievement in the course of development of life on earth dominates popular thinking and civilized instinctive knowledge. This assumption informs our creative and scientific narratives as well as our cultural imaginary, socio-environmental strategies, and decisions. Most important, it introduces a bias that helps authors, as in the example above, to neglect facts and obscure the truth about wilderness and nonhuman intelligence.

These omissions raise several difficult questions. For instance, what would the conclusion of the above narrative have been had it included Roger Lewin’s (2005) information that the human brain has in fact shrunk through time, particularly after the Agricultural Revolution? Or what would comparison to other forms of life reveal about human intelligence if we acknowledge how much longer the other forms of life have existed and if we consider the positive effect of their cultural strategies on their own health as well as on the health of their biosystems? Or what would such comparison reveal had the narrative focused on the deterioration of diversity and health due to civilized human activity discussed by Armelagos et al. (1991) or Fábrega (1997)?

To answer these questions, we must acknowledge the principles of wilderness, which challenge the civilized story. Therefore, we have to revisit the underlying premises in our formative narratives so as to understand what

made life thrive in wilderness and shrink under human civilization. Most important, for the purposes of this book, we need to examine the role that narratives play in colonizing our imagination and the implications of the stories of civilization and wilderness for life on earth.

ON COLONIZATION

So how do stories colonize our imagination and what are the implications? Colonialism is the material manifestation of a socio-economic and socio-environmental system that is founded on civilized epistemology. As discussed earlier, civilized cultures of subsistence are modeled on predation. Energy – from food, labour, and outside sources used in production – plays a critical role in this socio-economic paradigm, where the goal is to maximize yield and profit for the predator at minimum possible cost, namely at the expense of the resources themselves. Since the resources are forced to exert and produce more than they receive back, they labour on deficit.¹⁶ This principle of surplus productivity and the resulting deficit of energy characterize civilized economies. Again, unlike other animal predators who contribute to a balance in the symbiotic communities of which they are an integral part, human predation is rooted in alienation from difference, and by extension in estrangement from diversity. A paradigm based on exploitation on deficit levels of energy necessarily leads to expansionism.

A classification system in which epistemological classes translate into socio-economic classes yields a culture fixated on conceptual boundaries and concurrently on the delineation of material borders. This is another instance where the imaginary materializes in the physical as epistemological and material borders impose real limitations on knowledge, movement, desires, and experience. Borders prohibit free access to space and necessities of life and play a critical role in controlling the existence of plant, human, and other animal resources, their reproduction, as well as time and space.

This purpose to control the sources of energy has led to the creation of the institution of private property, which structured unequal relations of power and unequal rights to agency and self-determination in the very fabric of civilized societies.¹⁷ In other words, borders have enforced ownership and dispossession; they have locked living beings in claustrophobic cells of dependence defined and constrained by such categories as owners and resources. Hence, when humans chose domestication as their source of livelihood, they forfeited movement – nomadism and pastoralism – and thus stopped relying on change and diversity, opting for sedentary settlement instead. Because this sedentary economic system runs on deficit, it constantly consumes more than it gives back. Consequently, nomadic, or roaming and gathering cultures, contribute to balance and diversity while civilization depletes the environment and concomitantly generates a need for

constant growth in the reproduction of human and other animal resources, inevitably leading to domesticated population explosion.¹⁸

It is well known that the Agricultural Revolution was marked by a sudden growth of human cities. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, cities are monocultural spaces. They are designated for one perspective and one species only, from which all “alien” needs and forms of life have been removed. City spaces are sanitized from wildness and, therefore, by nature of their high (and growing) density, cannot be self-sufficient. Here, competition is exterminated, while “useful” animal people are forcefully concentrated on farms outside the urban spaces, thereby submitting the “countryside” to serving the needs and agency of its conqueror, the city.

This creates a paradoxical situation in which civilized societies depend simultaneously on sedentary confinement, expansionism, and absence. This is a system of colonization, in which the predator resides in one place but controls and consumes a distant land base. Colonization thus manifests itself in the parasitic socio-economic paradigm in which the predator succeeds in shutting off the mechanisms that regulate its consumption and growth, ultimately leading to the depletion of the environment and, therefore, to a constant need for new territories to colonize.

In other words, the process of colonization begins with the ontological conception of ownership of land and resources, which leads to a sedentary system of extraction of labour, flesh, and essence from an environment that does not constitute one’s community or land base. In this symbiotic system, the parasite constructs the world as alien and devises effective systems of exploitation, ownership, and control that allow the parasite in absentia to consume energy in a one-way flow. To succeed in this project, civilization developed technologies to facilitate exploitation by proxy of places and entities whom the breeder, owner, and exploiter may not necessarily see, know,¹⁹ touch, or hold.

The first of these technologies is hence the technology of absence. In contrast to wilderness, where presence and empathy are critical for vitality, civilization functions on alienation and absence. This entails physical and emotional absence, but also includes a metaphysical dimension, since technological development is literally linked to death. Namely, the rise of hunting, i.e. killing of others for food, during the Upper Palaeolithic period in the Middle East led some human groups to develop hunting technologies. Palaeoanthropologist Clive Gamble (in Ingold, 1997; p. 94) connects this development in hunting technologies to colonization, while anthropologist Richard Lee (1988) links the appearance of human language to the rise in hunting activities. Hunting thus led to domestication, and both of these cultures of subsistence kill intentionally and on a systematic basis.

The creation of distance between the one who inflicts pain and the victim makes it possible for frugivores to switch to serial killing on a regular basis. In this respect, language provides the grammar for ritualized murder. The purpose of language is to generate regularity by inculcating preconceived notions

and formulae for their application. In this sense, language differs from communication – which is the foundation of life – in the same way that technology differs from tools. Tools and communication are irregular and respond to the needs of the moment. They do not require a system to ensure standardization and both have an important place in wilderness. Language and technologies, in contrast, are systems that allow a ritualistic behaviour regardless, or even in spite of, need. John Zerzan (2002; 2008) explains that the invention of language and the growing human reliance on symbolic thought are at the root of civilized violence, for abstract representation provided a vehicle for human alienation from the real world, culminating in contemporary culture's pathological dependence on technology, virtual reality, and representation. Symbolic thought and systems of representation through language and art (but also through politics) are capable of subverting meaning and substituting fact with fiction. They can convince us that illness, suffering, or mass murder (war), for instance, are forces of life, or that the Third World poor are poor because this is what they want from life and are, therefore, content. In other words, symbolic culture and abstraction are vital elements of language, because they set the rules, or the grammar, for structuring, molding, and controlling our (mis)understanding and (mis)communication. This grammar is the technology that institutionalizes suffering and ritual killing by facilitating emotional bonding to – and allowing the creation of identity based on – the absent and the imaginary.

In the wild, empathy is the regulatory mechanism that depends on presence and understanding. Its function is to minimize killing and pain, and thus it renders perpetual killing difficult for a species whose place in the community of life historically has been among the pacifists. Conversely, language and symbolic culture create the necessary distance. Hence, civilized human carnivores may weep as they relate to the dying teenagers in the fictional *The Fault in Our Stars*, for instance. Readers, including those bombed or colonized by the wealthy White North, feel the pain of the fictional(ized) White, North American humans as they get devoured by a competing system of colonization known as cancer. At the same time, these technologies of absence allow the civilized to remain blind and deaf to the cries of the mothers losing their children in the slaughterhouse and to the terrible suffering these children experience as they are killed when yearning to live. The civilized carnivores remain unmoved as they dig into the fried flesh of the lamb with their fork and chew on the dead. In the emptiness of the world we have ravaged, we do not weep for the living for we have created a cult of absence and death.

This point of convergence of language, hunting technologies, and symbolic thought is the genesis of humanity. The civilized narrative correlates contemporary human identity with writing, literature, and theorizing. Once again, this narrative constructs these abilities as inherently and exclusively human (e.g. Chomsky, 1957 and 1972). It also portrays these qualities as giving human animals advantages that render their reproductive and

survival strategies superior. Hence, humans are distinguished and separated from other animals not only epistemologically, as discussed in the earlier section on civilization, but also ontologically.

Thus, ever since the birth of language, the war on wilderness has become a one-way path towards alienation, civilization, and ultimately literature. More than a metaphor then, literature constitutes the very core of civilized life. I would contend that civilized life itself is literature, since language and literacy have also provided the means to encode a self-legitimizing and self-replicating epistemology. The first chapter of this book examines in-depth these mechanisms, particularly French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard's (1984) concept of "grand narratives of legitimation" by means of which non-truth or fiction can be reaffirmed over reality. In the meantime, this brings us to the second technology, namely one that encodes and ensures the narrative's propagation.

Recent research into texts and narratives has produced some fascinating insights into the mechanisms of cultural reproduction. Jack Zipes (2009) argues that stories work as memes. Namely, they fill us with informational units that play the role of cultural genes. Zipes' conclusion is based on his study of the history of European folktales, the evolution of human cognition, as well as on his research into (written) children's literature. This intersection of oral information, the literary, and the biological provides a nexus for the successful proliferation of civilized principles, where writing technologies play a critical role in the colonization of human minds and desires by civilized memes. But again, these technologies are rooted in the Agricultural Revolution. In fact, according to Walter Ong (1982, 1986) and Jack Goody (1968, 1977, 1987), the need for writing arose in agricultural, stratified societies where debt was recorded to bind the debtor to relationships of unequal ownership and exploitation. Language and symbolic culture provide the grammar to structure the exchange rate for symbolic capital. In this respect, grammar comprises a system of rules that standardize the uniform application of previously derived formulae, thus ensuring the outcome of social interactions within a class and between classes remains stable and controlled. This system provides the codes for the unequal exchange in the economy of individual effort and social economy.

Language is thus intimately implicated in the culture of subsistence and socio-environmental paradigm as its concepts and grammar infiltrate our brains, thereby changing them at an early age (Chomsky, 1957, 1972; Goody, 1968; Ong, 1982, 1986), while literacy ensures that the narrative that structures our socio-environmental economy remains fixed. In this sense, people constitute the repositories for the narrative that colonizes them. By reproducing themselves and educating their children through language and civilized stories, they ensure the self-propagation of domestication and humanism.

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1990) explains the mechanisms involved in this process of colonization or incorporation of culture and

ideology. According to him, experiences and information are encoded in the flesh and influence people's durable dispositions, informing their choices and behaviour and usually prompting them to act in accord with the social norms of the group to which they belong. As each person literally incorporates previous – her own and her ancestral – experiences, she becomes aligned with the cultural heritage and, through these dispositions, beliefs, feelings, body, and mind, becomes part of the economy of effort, the effort that would have been needed in wilderness to (re)invent new solutions on new occasions. Bourdieu calls this flux of history and anthropology *habitus*. What renders this process of colonization efficient is the *doxa*, because it constitutes the knowledge and beliefs the knower does not need to actively know that she knows or holds and that, therefore, remain in the realm of the self-evident and unspoken (Bourdieu, 1979, 1990).

The economy of effort is the mechanism by which civilization reproduces its cultural and social institutions. Instead of making new decisions based on presence and a wholesome understanding of reality, the person economizes effort and, through *habitus* and *doxa*, re-enacts the already established cultural and social patterns of behaviour by applying the previously deduced conclusions and derived formulae from events that one may have not lived but that have nonetheless been inscribed into our body *hexis* – or, the way the body carries itself, moves, and interacts with one's space. Precisely because the *doxa* remains unknown to the knower, the whole mechanism of enculturation secures the permanence of the past even when challenged by individual desires and *praxis*, which nonetheless leave room for surprise.

As discussed earlier, the civilized narrative is built on classification. Therefore, the body, or *corpus*, incorporates social and symbolic capital along with the epistemology, the *doxa*, the *habitus*, and the limitations to movement and access to sources of subsistence. This embodiment of civilization by human animals explains the narrative's tenacity. We thus become a vector of the dialectical forces of revolution and concomitantly of conservatism, and where we yearn for wildness and change, we re-enact permanence. In this process of the narrative's propagation, our bodies and *esprits*²⁰ provide the slate upon which civilization inscribes its text.

To successfully colonize its human resources, civilization needs to modify their inner landscape so they would willingly serve the needs of the colonizer at a high cost for themselves²¹ both in terms of energy and in terms of loss of empathy, understanding, and quality of experience. As discussed earlier, resources are forced to generate surplus value of products or flesh for their owners/consumers at minimum cost. This system of modification of wild behaviour and a systematic imposition of civilized information and schemata for (im)moral behaviour and various ethical stances rooted in alienation and apathy are one of the most prominent features of civilization and are critical for its proliferation.

My book, *Wild Children – Domesticated Dreams* (2013), explores in depth how the institution of domestication, known as education, engineers

the predatory body *hexis, habitus*, dreams, minds, and *praxis* according to a uniform standard. There is no room for this analysis here; however, it is important to note that literature plays a critical role in this project of inculcation of civilized formulae, which is the topic of the present book. My analysis of Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* in Chapter One exposes this connection between education, domestication, violence, and colonization. Here, what is presented as an empowering and liberating story in reality reproduces the narrative of domestication. It conveys the message that a wild child gets punished by getting denied food and love, but when he kills the wild beasts in his imagination and thus eradicates the wildness in himself, he gets rewarded by being allowed back into the now sanitized home.

The story depicts as normal – even loving – family relationships that punish, exclude, and domesticate. Furthermore, the logic on which the story is built is that of con/sequences – a term that conveys both the concept of sequence (continuity) and punishment. Civilized premises thus render knowledge chrono/logical, which adds another dimension to the system of control of time and space, namely a dimension of violence. The story is thus built on the logic of violence. The narrative takes the reader step by step through the sequence of events, which begin with the boy's wildness. The wild boy then proceeds through a stage where his parents intentionally inflict pain to teach him a lesson. He then kills the wild beings and finally is reintegrated in the now clean, domesticated space and given food. By identifying with the protagonist, the audience empathizes with the violent child, who kills the wild beasts, as well as with the structural violence of his home. This empathic connection renders the reader receptive to the colonizing potential of a fictional story about the colonization of a little boy, which is also about the colonization of his environment and thus of ours too. The story infects and conquers the wildness inside as well as the wilderness outside. Like other narratives of empowerment, it empowers one at the expense of others but, in the end, colonizes us all.

This nexus of domestication, colonization, and literature is also evident in other children's books. For instance, in *Anne of Greene Gables*, discussed in Chapter Three, Anne, an initially disempowered orphan in Nova Scotia, is empowered by agreeing to participate in the colonization of land. The narrative omits the information that the land had been stolen from indigenous human and nonhuman populations for agrarian purposes to serve white settlers and thus presents colonialism from the perspective of the colonizer; it depicts it as good and as something to strive for. Anne further empowers herself by adhering to the gendered expectations of her female class and chooses to remain with the elderly adoptive family and a male friend instead of pursuing her own dreams and fulfilling her own purpose. She is thus colonized as a female resource for the purpose of reproduction and provision of care.

Another good illustration of this narrative is *The Secret Garden*. Here, a young white male of the dominant class is healed and empowered by the

sacrifices that the female peasants and female orphans make on his behalf. He heals by consuming them. Yet another children's book, *The Wind in the Willows*, portrays positively the wealthy male Toad who can use and abuse the female working class in order to enjoy freedom while others work and remain in their place, the status quo.

There are many examples of how humanist narratives selectively construct humanity and empower the human at the expense of the nonhuman, or how feminist narratives of empowerment conceal the fact that their interests are vested in the segregation and oppression of others and, by implication, of themselves. It is this chain of abuse, based on race, gender, sexual orientation, marital (patriarchal) status, species, ethnicity, class, ad infinitum, that ensures the perpetual consumption and colonization of lives and wilderness. Examining these stories of "liberation" from the perspective of wildness reveals how firmly most of them are rooted in separation and shows how deeply humanist epistemology weaves violence into the very framework, not only for knowing the world but also for relating to it and imagining it.

ON LITERATURE

The stories we hear and tell and the larger narratives in which they are inscribed thus transcend us. On the level of the mundane, they formulate our conception of humanity and the world, prescribe our diet, tell us what is illness and health, instruct us on whom to worship and whom to obey, what to know, how to move, sleep, and live. Whether articulating our imaginary or real experiences, they underlie cultures and motivations; they inform our decisions and direct our actions with dire repercussions for the world we inhabit.

Recently, there has been a surge in narrative studies from a range of disciplines such as medical anthropology, sociolinguistics, law, even biology, among others. However, there has not yet been a truly multi-disciplinary approach, particularly one that includes anarchist perspectives that would examine the underlying premises of knowledge and its colonization of human and other resources. The aim of this book is to fill this gap by taking narrative analysis deeper in the context of critique of civilization and to analyse how the underlying premises inform literature in order to understand how fiction shapes knowledge and, through our dispositions, body *hexis*, *habitus*, *doxa*, and *praxis*, affects reality. Namely, this study of children's literature as knowledge, culture, and social foundation aims to bridge the gap between science, economics, and literature by exploring the interconnectedness of fiction and reality as a two-way road.

As discussed in the sub-sections above, literature constitutes an integral part of the technology of domestication and, therefore, has continued to propagate domesticated logic and mythology for thousands of years. The Indian collection of moralistic fables from the oral tradition, known as the *Pañcatantra*, also

mentioned above, illustrates this purpose of fiction, having constituted a bible of instruction for the child-prince, the future ruler over living and non-living resources. Aesop, Krylov, de la Fontaine, and Afanasiev carried on the fable tradition, depicting anthropomorphic animals in stories that, unlike wild stories, guided the audience towards moral conclusions. The magical tales of the *Arabian Nights*, *The Canterbury Tales*, and the ancient Chinese and Japanese works of morals and ethics provide other examples of civilized narratives.

The purpose of civilized texts has remained the same for the most part – that is, to seal relationships of debt and socio-economic inequality. This purpose continues to drive most civilized narratives, sometimes in surprising ways. For instance, a fictional children’s book like A.A. Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh* may appear to be a simple, innocent, and comical story at first glance. Or Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, to take another example, may seem to be mocking the civilized social norms and exposing the absurdity of language and civilized conventions. In reality, both works reconfirm the very culture the books ridicule. In *Alice*, this is expressed at the end, in the moment when Alice wakes up back in her world and exhales a sigh that amounts to:

“O’ thank goodness, I’m home, back to that *habitus* of oppressive, yet familiar and therefore dear order; for that dream was madness and chaos while home, no matter how ridiculous, nonsensical, even abusive, is always best”.

Thus, even through a narrative that promises to venture beyond the civilized frontiers into a new and untamed territory, where meaning is discarded and paradigms are shattered these stories often remain the vehicle for the larger narrative that reconfirms the institution of civilization, its language, mythology, and predatory violence.

This violence can be traced throughout the history of the written word. Most stories rationalize murder by weaving ontological reasons for killing into their stories of origins that explain the *raison d’être* of beings. The slaying of disobedient deities, of human animals, and nonhuman people, or of trees in these stories rationalize the necessity of these acts of violence and destruction. For instance, one of the earliest written texts is “The Stories of Heaven and Hell” from ancient Mesopotamia, dating more than 2,000 years B.C.E. The most well-known of them, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, recounts the murder of the guardian of the forest, which is followed by the felling of the cedar trees and then by the murder of animals. This great act of violence moved mountains and hills and changed the world.

“At the third blow Humbaba fell. Then there followed confusion for this was the guardian of the forest whom they had felled to the ground. For as far as two leagues the cedars shivered when Enkidu felled the watcher of the forest, he at whose voice Hermon and Lebanon used

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to tremble. Now the mountains were moved and all the hills, for the guardian of the forest was Killed” (Sandars, 1972: 83).

Sacred Hindu texts, too, speak of the violence of domestication and the destruction of chaos: “The Devī Durgā has eight arms and in her many hands she holds the weapons and emblems of all the gods, who turned their weapons over to her to kill the demon of chaos” (Eck, 1985; p. 28). Classical Arabic poetry, as well, sang praises not only to domesticated love but also to war. One of its most influential poets, Tumādir bint ‘Amr ibn al-Ḥarth known as Al-Khansa, lived in the 7th century A.D. She fought in wars, lost her brothers and sons to war, and wrote poetry about war.

Less overtly than in the above examples, the following texts articulate the tensions inherent in civilization and some try to imagine different worlds. For instance, living in the 14th and 15th centuries Europe, one of the earliest feminists, Christine de Pizan, speaks of oppression and imagines a feminist utopia, *La Cité des Dames*, establishing a potent prototype. Nikolai Nosov’s feminist Greenville Town in *The Adventures of Dunno and Friends* is a response to this utopic vision, which this book analyses in depth.

The intersection of class, labour, and inheritance with the domestication of sexuality and the colonization of women as a reproductive class is evident in other works of literature as well. For example, Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron* from 14th-century Italy probed questions of sexuality, normalcy, deviance, social relations, and community in a most creative manner. This intersection is even more apparent in civilized romantic tragedies for throughout the centuries, writers explored the theme of love across social classes from different cultural norms.

For instance, during the Umayyad Caliphate in the 7th century, an Arabic story, known as *Qays wa Layla*, depicts a passionate love between a young man by the name of Qays and a young woman by the name of Layla. Her father refuses their union and forces her to marry another man. The worst tragedy that can befall a person in that culture is to lose civilized reason and language – that mark of human exclusivity and the tool of domestication. This loss was Qays’ punishment for illicit love; he goes insane and is banished to the desert to live in silence. He could no longer write poetry as he is forced to step outside the boundaries of civilized society. However, the narrative omits the truth about the community of life in the desert, and we are left to believe that this was the end for him.

The 16th-century English rendering of the same tragedy in the context of European culture presents a logical ending that is deemed most terrible by the standards of European society for desiring a union that would lead families to share their wealth with competing clans. Hence, the lovers in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* must die. This variation between capital punishment or loss of either reason or language has been used throughout the history of literature to either make the point of domestication or challenge it.

Ophelia drowns in the face of her lover's obsessions. Madame Bovary's misplaced love for things and indulgence in the abusive and manipulated desires for high-class living spell her death. Tolstoy's Anna Karenina throws herself under the train, thereby exposing the lethal aspect of technology, when alienation from nature and immersion in bourgeois values become unbearable.

Nikolai Karamzin's *Poor Liza* (1792) aptly demonstrates how this intersection of domestication, violence, death, insanity, class, and gender play out in illicit love. *Poor Liza* is a precursor of Adolphe Adams' ballet *Giselle*, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, and the motif of control of dreams and desires of the reproductive and productive classes can be traced in all of these works. Liza, the protagonist, was born into a wealthy peasant family, the author tells us, because her father worked hard. This connection between work and reward is one of the fundamental myths of civilization. The story opens with the contextualization of Liza within the exploitative relationship between the city of Moscow and the countryside. Her lover, Erast, chooses to go to war, gambles away his wealth, abuses her trust, and weds another. His choices are made out of fear and thus it is Erast's personal weakness in the face of social violence that leads to the tragic end. As he killed others during the war, Liza kills herself. Like Ophelia, she drowns in the river, while Erast goes on to live with his weakness and choice. His punishment is a sorry life; hers is death. In most of these stories, women receive the death penalty for transgressing the borders of their reproductive and socio-economic classes.

In the logic of domestication, crossing forbidden borders warrants capital punishment. For the classical Arabic narrative, this penalty was madness and banishment to the wilderness; for the English it was death; and for the Russian culture it is bad conscience and solitude. As seen above, this is also the logic of the children's book *Where the Wild Things Are*. The boy is denied food and banished from the civilized space. The implied threat is either you die or kill the wildness, the beast.

The fact that the topoi for legalized violence – such as war or the death penalty – or for racism, sexism, speciesism, stratification, poverty, inter alia, still persist, both in civilized society and in the fictional narratives we dream, points to that intrinsically and qualitatively things have not changed over the course of civilized human history. If anything, they have exacerbated both in reality and in representational culture. The images broadcast today make Goya's depictions of war appear to be from the realm of tales, an *Alice in Wonderland* adventure, a nightmare we think we can blink off upon awakening but in reality only step into an even more terrifying world of horror. The issue is not simply that *The Sleep of Reason Brings Forth Monsters*, engendering a desolate space where children's literature constitutes the lullabies that lull our humanness to sleep. As this book will try to demonstrate, it is rather that civilized reason begets monsters, for through stories that try to explain our *raison d'être*, it weaves a narrative of captivity, servitude, and death.

ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

Since I am conducting this inquiry as a long-term resident of civilization and using its tools, such as language and literacy, the questions and the format of the book are structured by my journey. Namely, the book intends to examine the epistemological, ontological, and anthropological foundation of narratives and the ways in which they inform children's literature. Therefore, the book consists of three chapters with each of the chapters dedicated to questions of epistemology, ontology, and anthropology respectively. The chapters consist of subchapters and sections whose lengths and numbers do not follow a symmetrical order as my priority was to respond to the needs of each question rather than to form.

The general introduction, entitled "The Root of It All: Theory of Literature and Life", is dedicated to the discussion of the terminology that informs my inquiry. It is critical for understanding the rest of the book as it lays down the theoretical perspectives from which I approach my analysis.

Chapter One, entitled "Epistemologies of Chaos and the Orderly Unknowledge of Literacy", proceeds with the examination of the first technology of domestication: language and its effect on knowledge. Because most scholars' interests are vested in humanism, sociolinguistic studies generally focus on the positive aspects of language. This chapter invites the reader to explore the darker side of language and the role of narratives in framing our conceptions of legitimacy, justice, economic inequality, illness, and health.

The chapter consists of ten subchapters, and the first subchapter contains six sections dedicated to the role of biography in science and literature as well as to the introduction of the three children's books I chose to illustrate the underlying premises of wildness and domestication. Even though I examine a wide range of fictional and scientific narratives, I focus on these books to illustrate three socio-environmental and socio-economic paradigms that stem from the ontological positions of civilization and wildness. These are the capitalist, socialist, and anarchist paradigms; and the three books are:

- 1 A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*, which depicts the civilized or the agricultural-capitalist world (monarchist, feudal, totalitarian, democratic systems, etc., are built on the premises of this model);
- 2 Tove Jansson's Moomin books because they capture a range of wild relationships across species and systems (various indigenous and anarcho-primitivist cultures fall into this spectrum);
- 3 Nikolai Nosov's anarcho-socialist world of *Dunno's Adventures* because it portrays an attempt at a compromise position between the wild and the civilized. The compromise spectrum ranges from the anarcho-socialist to Communist systems. However, as my analysis of *Dunno* illustrates, even though this socio-economic culture allots space for both humans and wilderness, it nonetheless remains rooted in the

epistemology of separation as well as in the ontology of civilization since it constructs humans as either “naturally” civilized or ineluctably on their way to civilization. It also accepts the food chain hierarchy, consumes domesticated (namely, colonized) nonhuman animals, and defines the purpose for the existence of human resources in terms of work for the “higher” humanist good.

The rest of the subchapters examine how the underlying premises inform our conceptions of justice, education, illness and health, private property, and nationalism both in fiction and life. That is why the central subchapter, which is six, links the real with the fictional by examining the implications when social workers and medical practitioners apply these notions in order to control and integrate young human resources. I illustrate this point with my anthropological research conducted on the medical sector in Sweden.

Chapter Two examines ontological problems regarding wild and civilized cosmogonies and the genesis of life. It is entitled “Genealogical Narratives of Wilderness and Domestication: Identifying the Ontologies of Genesis and Genetics in Children’s Literature” and consists of eleven subchapters that explore narratives of identity, both as belonging to a group and as separated from other beings. The question of origins is of particular significance here, opening up a number of venues for exploration. For instance, wild and civilized notions of origins lead people to different kinship models, which in turn have implications for whether they allow others to share space, wealth, and the world. Specifically, the civilized dependence on technologies exposes our alienation from the world and our inability to adapt our physiology to ecological pressures, including the anthropogenic environmental changes. In her praise of the cyborg, Donna Haraway illustrates the whole point of civilization when she says that it is imperative to forget our past, our earth, in order to distance ourselves from our siblings in mud. The problems of presence and memory that this position raises are the subject of the last subchapter in this part of the book.

Finally, the third chapter, entitled “In the End: Anthropological Narratives in Fiction and Life”, examines how our anthropological narratives inform fiction and how, in turn, fiction informs our science and our world. It consists of an introduction, three subchapters, and a conclusion. The subchapters discuss palaeontological and other historical and anthropological research that disproves civilized mythology.

NOTES

1. Throughout the book, the term “civilization” will be used in the anthropological sense, i.e. as a concept that focuses on the social relationships among human animals and their socio-environmental attitudes, which stem from an anthropocentric world view that allows for predatory cultures of subsistence and which

in turn yield specific material cultures, all of which have dire repercussions on the world in which we live. For instance, Eric Sunderland (1973), palaeontologists like Björn Kurtén (1984, 1995), and anthropologists Tim Ingold (1997), Marshall Sahlins (1974, 2008), Hugh Brody (2000), Piers Vitebsky (2006), John Zerzan (2002, 2008), among others, inform my definition of civilization.

2. By environment, I simply mean the world that surrounds us. I differentiate it from the political concept of environmentalism, which stems from a desire to make that surrounding world livable, useful, or whatever else that any given group of environmentalists may see as high on their priority list of concerns.
3. There has been a debate in the biological sciences regarding the type of relationships that the term “symbiosis” should include. Throughout the 20th century, most biologists relied on Anton de Bary’s definition in 1878, which includes parasitic associations in the same category of friendly associations. R.A. Lewin (1982) and Lynda J. Goff (1982) make an excellent case for keeping de Bary’s use to include the whole range of intimate associations. Lewin’s argument is particularly strong as it acknowledges the bias effect on phenomenological observations and scientific conclusions of terminology built on exclusion. In this book, I rely on their definitions as well as on the more updated discussion by T.L.F. Leung and R. Poulin (2008).
4. I develop these connections between literature and human genesis as a descent into civilization in my play, entitled *Red Delicious* (2003): <http://www.inthelivingandoftheliving.org/essays/test>.
5. See DeVault et al. (2003) “Scavenging by vertebrates: behavioural, ecological, and evolutionary perspectives on an important energy transfer pathway in terrestrial ecosystems”. Also, in the tenth subchapter in Chapter Two, I discuss in depth Lasse Nordlund’s experiment that shows hunting is not sustainable because of the high cost of energy required in order to hunt down, kill, then share the victim with one’s group.
6. I do not endorse laboratory experiments on animal people, and, therefore, do my best to avoid citing experiments where pain and trauma have been inflicted on living beings (for example, rats) in order to observe the transmission of this memory to future generations.
7. See Roger Lewin (2005) and Stephen Jay Gould (2002).
8. For more information, see the Human Genome Project: <http://www.genome.gov/> and National Geographic: <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2013/07/125-explore/shared-genes>.
9. I use the feminine pronoun throughout the book to refer to generic individuals and revert to either masculine pronouns, when my intention is to highlight a patriarchal aspect, or gender-neutral pronouns to signal the arbitrary differentiation between life and nonlife.
10. For examples of representation of African races during the transatlantic slave trade as either different from Europeans or even as an altogether nonhuman animal, see the classification of human races by Carolus Linnaeus (1707–1778), Voltaire (1694–1778), Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon 1707–1788), Georges Cuvier (1769–1832), among others.
11. See the conference by Nekeisha Alexis-Baker entitled “Speciesism, Sexism and Racism: The Intertwined Oppressions”, 2009, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI. Retrieved on 9th July 2014 from <http://www.nonhumanslavery.com/speciesism-racism-and-sexism-intertwined>.
12. *The Washington Post* published statistics for 2013 on April 24, 2014. Retrieved on 3rd May 2014, from <http://apps.washingtonpost.com/g/documents/national/animals-taken-by-wildlife-services-fy-2013/1027/?2>.

13. These attitudes have their roots in the nation-state building period of Europe and WWII, but events in the 21st century show these schemata have not disappeared. The Odessa Massacre is an event that has a tendency to recur several times per century; the latest took place on May 2, 2014, when Ukrainian ultranationalist leader of the Right Sector, Dmitry Yarosh, declared a war on Ukrainian federalists with an ensuing neo-Nazi attack on pro-federalist activists in Odessa that day. As pro-federalist activists were trapped in the Trade Unions Building, locked there and burned alive, the attackers chanted: “Burn Colorado, burn”. The victims who tried to escape the burning building were either clubbed to death or shot. Supporters of this action referred throughout the Internet media to this event as the extermination of vermin and pests. See The Global Research Independent Report on the Fire and Massacre in Odessa on May 2: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/independent-report-on-massacre-and-fire-in-odessa-may-2-2014/5382241>. Also see: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/05/world/europe/kievs-reins-weaken-as-chaos-spreads.html?_r=0. And a pro-Western account of the events in the following United Nations “Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine”: UNHCR, June 15, 2014. Retrieved June 21, 2014: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/HRMMUReport15June2014.pdf>. And, for comparison, Ukrainian ultranationalist leader calls for guerilla war against pro-federalists. Published May 18, 2014 13:38; edited May 18, 2014 14:37 <http://rt.com/news/159712-guerilla-war-ukraine-yarosh/>.
14. In a BBC article, Russell Smith reported on the effectiveness of hate in instigating the Hutu genocide of the Tutsi people. See “The Impact of Hate Media in Rwanda”, Smith, December 3, 2003. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3257748.stm>. Also see the BBC report of May 17, 2011 entitled “Rwanda: How the Genocide Happened”: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13431486>.
15. For example, see Edward O. Wilson’s *Sociobiology* (2000) or Williams et al. “New perspectives on anthropoid origins” (2010).
16. I discuss this problem of civilized economies in depth in the 10th subchapter of Chapter Two.
17. In *What is Property? An Inquiry into the Principle of Right and of Government*, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon argues that an economic system based on property ownership is theft from nature.
18. Armelagos et al. (1991) discuss the phenomenon of sudden population growth in agricultural societies with regard to the loss of health and quality of life.
19. Orientalism, according to Edward Said (1979), functioned in this way: Backed by the power for violence, the imperialist could devise any picture of the imperial object without regard to its veracity and had the power to impose it as a structure that, in the context of this relationship, benefited the imperial power. This, however, does not mean that the object is completely deprived of any subjectivity or independence in relating to this knowledge. However, within the framework of a relationship that ultimately consumes the lives, dreams, personalities, and associations of the colonized, this structure of oppression has the most tragic and painful repercussions on the victims’ experience of life.
20. Like *ande* in Swedish, the French term *esprit* incorporates both mind and spirit and hence linguistically renders the relationship more holistic than the separate terms for “mind” and “spirit” in English and Russian, the languages with which I will be predominantly concerned in this work.
21. I enunciate the links between domestication, education, and colonization of resources and land in my article dedicated to the topic, entitled “Education as the Domestication of Inner Space”, *Fifth Estate*, Spring/Summer 2014, #391.