

## Anti-speciesism and Animals' Healing Power: A Zoo Critical Reading of *Grief is the Thing with Feathers*

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### ABSTRACT:

Man's relationship to the non-human species is stereotyped as one-sided brutal relationship that objectify animals in the past studies. Some people do not care about non-human species; therefore, exploit and treat them brutally. This study, however, presents an anti-speciesism attitude and investigates the bond that humans and animals may share, specifically when the latter help people deal with the difficulties of loss. Max Porter's *Grief is the Thing with Feathers* is analyzed in this research through the lens of zoo criticism which falls within the purview of ecocriticism. The study argues that Porter's novel presents an anti-speciesism perspective through presenting a bird, namely a crow as a powerful being capable of healing grief. Writing back speciesism, the representation of the crow transcends the boundaries of Otherness, silence, and/or objectification. The study concludes that animals' representation in metamodernist literature, the examined novel as a case in point, is experimental in terms of narrative techniques, language and character portrayal so as to transcend the meanings of thingification and objectification and thus present an anti-speciesism perspective. As such Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin's *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* is a key source in this study, alongside other critical works on environmental humanities and animal studies that focus on animality and spirituality and the shifting roles of humans and animals in a "posthuman" world. The study, therefore, answers the questions of man-animal relationship, and its literary representation in Porter's novel. The significance of the study springs from the need to stop discrimination against animals and treat them instead as intrinsically valuable.

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### Introduction:

Describing the moral significance of animals is one of the primary conceptual efforts that have affected animal ethics and the broader area of environmental philosophy. René Descartes' existential perspective, however; denies animals' consciousness by arguing that they are mindless beings incapable of reasoning or experiencing pain. This view of animals as mindless creatures finds its echo in the term "the absent referent" presented by Carol Adams in her *Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990). While often associated with the sexual

objectification of women, the term initially denoted the deliberate lack of verbal expression that is present in all forms of animal exploitation. Adams expressed her concerns with the manner in which the word "meat," used to denote the components of deceased animals, contributes to the verbal erasure of the tangible casualties resulting from industrial agriculture. (20)

Dealing with animals as the absent referent seeps into the postcolonial aspects of subjugation, otherness, racism, and all what is related to oppression. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin in their *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (2010) explain that:

Postcolonialism's major theoretical concerns: otherness, racism and miscegenation, language, translation, the trope of cannibalism, voice and the problems of speaking of and for others – to name just a few – offer immediate entry points for a re-theorizing of the place of animals in relation to human societies. But dominant European discourses have expressed that dominance by constructing others – both people and animals – as animal, both philosophically and representationally. (135)

The strict evaluation of animal status is undermined by various ways in which humans—primarily from Western societies—use animals and use animalistic metaphor to demolish or marginalize other human cultures. Dehumanization, for example, is a postcolonial strategy followed by dominant groups against other people who are enslaved or captured.

The use of animal analogies and classifications to defend abuse, and dehumanization, killing, and slavery are pervasive throughout human history of other people's oppression. Reading *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery* (1987) by Marjorie Spiegel illustrates how the writer compares the enslavement of black people in the past with the enslavement of animals in the past and present. (9) However, Spiegel asks: "Why it is an insult for anyone to be compared to an animal?" (14) The answer of this question follows a deconstructional approach as it is presented in the form of anti-speciesism perspective that traces the history of certain cultures in which the names of animals are used as surnames of people: "Native American [...] actually adopted the names of admired animals. Names such as Silling Bull, Running Deer and Hawkeye are familiar to us; they expressed the admiration Native Americans had for the animals with whom the shared the earth." (14) In this regard, Spiegel defines speciesism according to three characteristics. First, it is: "a belief that different species of animals are significantly different from one another in their capacities to feel pleasure and pain and live an autonomous existence, usually involving the idea that one's own species has the right to ride and use others." Second, it is "a policy of enforcing such asserted right." Third, it is "a system of government and society based upon it." (8) In simple words, speciesism refers to the pervasive bias toward animals. Speciesists see animals just as a tool to achieve certain objective, disregarding their inherent completeness, desires, requirements, and intricate history. One might justify speciesism by using this racist line of "reasoning." In fact, the notion that farmed and caged animals lack the capacity for suffering or experiencing emotions to the same degree as the animals with which one affectionately coexists in his\her households may be seen as speciesist. Broadly speaking, speciesism is a kind of prejudice that targets those who do not belong to a certain species. The act of exhibiting prejudice against animals belonging to other species is widely accepted as a customary practice among the majority of

human communities. The occurrence and intensity of this kind of prejudice vary across different geographical locations, resulting in differential treatment of certain animal species. For instance, dogs, cows, and dolphins are seen divergently in many communities. Most civilizations have the commonality of engaging in very detrimental forms of prejudice toward some animal species.

Numerous studies by scientists and social critics, who are interested in animal, detail the complex web of institutional, cultural, linguistic, and legal mechanisms that prevent the general public from being aware of the widespread abuse of animals. Eva Meijer, for example, in her *When Animals Speak* (2019) illustrates:

Non-human animals are individuals with their own perspectives on life, who form relations with human and non-human others. In current human legal and political systems, and in many cultural practices, they are seen and used as objects. Animal rights theorists have challenged this since the 1970s, arguing that non-human animals are sentient beings, who are similar to humans in morally relevant aspects and who should therefore be seen as part of our moral communities. (12)

Drawing upon this perspective, contemporary researches in the field of political philosophy and even literary ones suggest the notion of seeing and representing non-human animals as political entities, with some subsets of these animals being part of interspecies communities. The shift from ethical consideration to political participation redirects inquiries regarding non-human animals from their treatment to gaining deeper understanding of their desired lifestyles, desired relationships with both humans and other animals, and how one can and should coexist on this shared planet. According to this context, zoo criticism can be taken into consideration when talking about anti-speciesism is tackled in literary representation.

Zoo criticism is one of the fastest growing subfields within ecocritical literary studies. It is concerned with how the relationship between human beings and animals gets reflected in literature. Huggan and Tiffin further underscore that zoo criticism:

is concerned not just with animal representation but also with animal rights, and this different genesis and trajectory from that of ecocriticism necessarily informs its intersection with the postcolonial. And just as ecocriticism and animal studies have developed rather differently, the two fields' conjunctions with postcolonialism to this point have also proceeded unevenly. (18)

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, the concept of zoo critique emerged as an innovative critical framework within the field of ecocriticism. Its purpose is to confront and contest various forms of animal cruelty and the resulting suffering experienced by these creatures. The emergence of this new genre of critique may be attributed to a deep-seated apprehension over all forms of cruel acts directed against animals. An example of this speciesism perspective can be recognized in the examined novel, namely *Grief is the Thing with Feather*:

My brother and I discovered a guppy fish in a rock pool somewhere. We set about trying to kill it. First, we flung shingle into the pool but the fish was fast. Then we tried large rocks and boulders, but the fish would hide in the corners beneath small crevices, or dart away. We were human boys and the fish was just a fish, so we devised a way to kill it... Dad didn't look up from his book but said 'you've done something bad I can tell'. (23)

Huggan and Tiffin demonstrate that zoo criticism is an attack on the Enlightenment-era narratives that posited a superior civilized species in opposition to the more primitive and wild ones. The authors propose that the field of animal studies intersects with postcolonial studies in terms of theoretical considerations such as "otherness, racism and miscegenation, language, translation," and "the trope of cannibalism." These intersections provide valuable foundations for reimagining the role of animals within the context of human society. (135) This exact intersection is at the core of zoo criticism as well as Max Porter's *Grief is the Thing with Feather*.

### ***Grief is the Thing with Feathers: An Overview***

Max Porter's *Grief is the Thing with Feathers* is a novella about death, melancholy, grief, and consolation. It tells the story of a husband and father bewildered by the sudden and unexpected loss of his wife. Along with him, there are his two sons, who are also struggling to cope with the debilitating grief that has engulfed them in their flat in London. The father dreams of a future filled with beneficent visitors and emptiness, while the boys run free and wild. During this intense anguish, a Crow shows up to take many roles, namely babysitter, protector, and a therapist. This wild and sensitive creature threatens to remain with the injured family until they are no longer in need of him. Months pass and the balm of memory soothes the ache of loss. The Crow's efforts bear fruit when the family members start to heal and move on.

Interestingly enough, Porter seems to rely upon two sources in writing his novella, namely Emily Dickinson's poem "Hope Is the Thing with Feathers" and Ted Hughes whose loss of his wife, Sylvia Plath, seems similar to that of the father who writes a book about this poet. Dickinson's hymn "Hope is the thing with feathers" highlights the capacity of humanity to hold on to hope. Using an extended metaphor, the poem paints a picture of hope as a mystical bird that lives in each heart. The poem suggests that optimism is very resilient and has a supernatural character. Porter uses one the poem's stanzas as an epigraph for novella. However, Porter substitutes certain words in the original poem with the word crow, the main character in the novella. Words such as love, freight, and groove are replaced by crow to indicate all the possible meaning the crow represents in the novella.

<sup>CROW</sup>  
 That Love is all there is,  
<sup>CROW</sup>  
 Is all we know of Love;  
<sup>CROW</sup>  
 It is enough, the freight should be  
<sup>CROW</sup>  
 Proportioned to the groove.—

*Emily Dickinson*

The story has a narrative structure that alternates between the perspectives of the Dad, the Crow, and the Boys. Despite being imbued with intense emotions; the narrative hardly exhibits sentimentality. Porter challenges the fixed register of the maudlin, instead constructing a tapestry of continuous fluctuations and adjustments in tone, transitioning from anger to insanity to vulgarity and wit. This is sometimes presented in a form of prose poem—a matter that is enhanced by the musicality of the words and their rhythmic tone:

Soft.

Slight.

Like light, like a child's foot talcum-dusted and kissed, like stroke-reversing suede, like dust, like pins and needles, like a promise, like a curse, like seeds, like everything grained, plaited, linked, or numbered, like everything nature-made and violent and quiet. (22)

Porter has a remarkable ability to reflect the adaptability of language and tone, skillfully contrasting informal expressions with lyrical imagery and metaphors. This is best exemplified by the opening chapter entitled "Boys" :

There's a feather on my pillow.

Pillows are made of feathers, go to sleep.

It's a big, black feather.

Come and sleep in my bed.

There's a feather on your pillow too.

Let's leave the feathers where they are and sleep on the floor. (9)

Each line of the above quote indicates a speech said by one of the boys addressing the other. The whole dialogue is written in a form of a poem—a matter that indicates the experimental technique of narration and exchanged dialogue. What is distinguished in this dialogue is the focus upon the feather upon the pillow. Reading the whole novella may enable the reader to interpret the feather as a symbol of the boys' dropped tears on their pillows; it stands for their grief. This is enhanced by their decision to "leave the feathers where they are and sleep on the floor." The same implicit meaning is reflected by Dad when he says: "Feathers between my fingers, in my eyes, in my mouth, beneath me a feathery hammock lifting me up a foot above the tiled floor." (11) The father, alongside the boys, has the same feelings of grief, loneliness, and despair:

Four or five days after she died, I sat alone in the living room wondering what to do. Shuffling around, waiting for shock to give way, waiting for any kind of structured feeling to emerge from the organizational fakery of my days. I felt hung-empty. The children were asleep. I drank. I smoked roll-ups out of the window.... The friends and family who had been hanging around being kind had gone home to their own lives. When the children went to bed the flat had no meaning, nothing moved. (10)

The confessional mode of Dad's speech is represented by means of first-person narration. This technique of narration, in fact, reflects the internal conflict of Dad. He, in simple words, vents his emotion—a matter that reflects Dad's subjectivity. The same mode and narrative technique is used by Boys to indicate their subjectivity in terms of the way they respond to their Mum's death:

We were small boys with remote-control cars and ink-stamp sets and we knew something was up. We knew we weren't getting straight answers when we asked 'where is Mum?' and we knew, even before we were taken to our room and told to sit on the bed, either side of Dad, that something was changed. We guessed and understood that this was a new life and Dad was a different type of Dad now and we were different boys, we were brave new boys without a Mum. (17)

Amid these conditions of "heavy mourning" the Crow knocks the door and announces: " *I won't leave until you don't need me anymore.*" (11) The main question one may ask is that "why a crow in particular?" This question leads one to trace the symbolic meaning of crows across cultures and civilizations. Many societies, such as the Greek, Roman, Babylonian, and Egyptian, historically held the crow in high esteem for its exceptional powers of observation and problem-solving. It is seen as carrier of wisdom and information in some mythologies. Mysticism and magic are also linked to it. It has been associated with divination and occult rituals due to its enigmatic behavior and sinister look. It is said to have ethereal or otherworldly powers in some civilizations. Crows have guardian or protective roles across various civilizations. There is a belief that they may give spiritual assistance, alert of crisis, or provide wisdom. They are considered a symbol of supernatural aid and vigilance when they are present. Crows are often linked with decay and death because of their hunting habits and their relationship with corpses. They may serve as spiritual guides or omens, representing the passage from this world into the next.

All the above meanings serve the context of the novella as well as the context of anti-speciesism that goes hand in hand with zoo criticism; these two, in fact, as said before underscore the coexistence between man and animals in this planet.

### The Crow in the Context of Anti-speciesism and Zoo Criticism

In their *Animal Crisis* (2022), Alice Crary and Louri Gruen explain that the current state of human-animal interactions is characterized by a crisis of significant magnitude. Presently, it is indisputable that the use and damage of animals and their habitats by humans, which includes actions leading to widespread animal mortality, have profound consequences not just for nonhuman animals but also for human beings around the world (13). An important consideration in animal ethics revolves around the topic of animal suffering. This encompasses the pain that animals endure in places like slaughterhouses and laboratories, as well as the suffering they experience in their natural environments. Another significant viewpoint questions the dominant focus on eliminating suffering, instead advocating for a stronger emphasis on acknowledging and safeguarding the rights and dignity of animals. However, *Grief is the Thing with Feather* addresses crucial ethical questions about improving Man's relationships with animals. The novella, in other words, pushes back against the notion of speciesism.

Starting with the moment Crow knocks the door, the author attracts the reader's attention to the size of Crow: "One shiny jet-black eye as big as my face, blinking slowly, in a leathery wrinkled socket... I wished I wasn't lying terrified in a giant bird embrace in my hallway." (12) Presenting Crow as a giant bird brings to the forefront the question of recognition and reversal of power relation. This reversal is clearly recognized in the way Dad lying terrified. Alongside the size, Crow communicates Dad via human verbal language—a matter that challenges animal oppression, misrecognition, and Otherness. What is recognized in Crow's human verbal language is its authoritative tone that places Dad in the zone of power receiver rather than generator of it:

Put me down, [Dad said]

not until you say hello

Put. Me. Down, I croaked, and my piss warmed the cradle of his wing.

*You're frightened. Just say hello.*

Hello.

*Say it properly.*

Hello Crow, I said. Good to finally meet you. (11-12)

One may notice that Crow's speeches are written in italics. This, as it is said above, indicates a kind of recognition that challenges Otherness. About Animals' language Eva Meijer in her book *When Animals Speak: Towards an Interspecific Democracy* (2019) illustrates:

Challenging an anthropocentric view of language formed by power relations can help humans to see animals of other species, and their languages, differently. Conceptualizing animal languages can also be significant in addressing certain practical problems between humans and other animals, for example, in border conflicts between groups of wild animals and human groups, or with regard to political participation of those non-human animals who are part of our societies. (12)

In political philosophy, the capacity of Crow to communicate is generally regarded as a vital requirement for being an active participant in politics and for belonging to the political community. Speaking, in this regard, is often regarded as a uniquely communicative endeavor, setting Crow apart from Dad in how it communicates and utilizes its voice.

Representation of Crow is not confined to its body size and empowered and authoritative language. Crow's representation further includes the role it plays in terms of Dad and boys' grief. Crow takes the role of cognitive therapist who would help the family to manage their problems by means of changing the way they think and behave:

Oi, look, trust me. Did I or did I not faithfully deliver St Vincent to Lisbon. Safe trip, a bit of liver, sniff, sniff, fabric softener, leather, railings melted for bombs, bullets. Did I or did I not carry the hag across the river. Shit not, did not. Sing song blackbird automatic fuck-you yellow, nasty, pretty boy, joke, creak, joke, crech, joke. Patience...I could've bent him backwards over a chair and drip-fed him sour bulletins of the true one-hour dying of his wife... I believe in the therapeutic method. (16)

Crow states confidentially that it is a mere therapist, he is a doctor, friend, analyst, and a babysitter:

We can do things other characters can't, like eat sorrow, un-birth secrets and have theatrical battles with language and God. I was friend, excuse, deus ex machina, joke, symptom, figment, spectre, crutch, toy, phantom, gag, analyst and babysitter. I was, after all, 'the central bird ... at every extreme'. I'm a template. I know that, he knows that. A myth to be slipped in. Slip up into. (18)

All these roles place Crow in a position that identifies it as power agency. As such, one can confirm that Porter's portrayal of Crow is an attempt by which "we" should speak for "them". Relying on Meijer's *When Animals Speak: Towards an Interspecific Democracy* (2019), Porter transcends

a negative stereotype of other animals as mute, or incapable of speaking, and keeps intact an idealized view of the human and human language.... To challenge

this, we need to develop a new understanding of language that can take into account the multitude of non-human animal expressions and ways of creating meaning, and that begins from the idea that other animals are beings who have their own perspective on life and their own ways of communicating this to others of their own and other species. (18)

Interestingly enough, Porter emphasizes the empowered position of Crow when he enables him to speak for itself and about itself—a matter that enhances the fact that it is no more a silenced Other. Crow says:

Inevitably I have to defend my position, because my position is sentimental. You don't know your origin tales, your biological truth (accident), your deaths (mosquito bites, mostly), your lives (denial, cheerfully). I am reluctant to discuss absurdity with any of you, who have persecuted us since time began. What good is a crow to a pack of grieving humans? (18)

Crow itself aims at transcending its stereotype that is linked to death and decay so as to emphasize instead its wisdom, heartfulness, and the assistance it can provide for those who suffer:

So, yes. I do eat baby rabbits, plunder nests, swallow filth, cheat death, mock the starving homeless, misdirect, misinform. Oi, stab it! A bloody load of time wasted...But I care, deeply. I find humans dull except in grief. There are very few in health, disaster, famine, atrocity, splendour or normality that interest me (interest ME!) but the motherless children do. Motherless children are pure crow. For a sentimental bird it is ripe, rich and delicious to raid such a nest. (17-8)

Crow is also a teacher: "He could learn a lot from me. That's why I'm here." (26) Dad admits this role when he says:

There is a fascinating constant exchange between Crow's natural self and his civilized self, between the scavenger and the philosopher, the goddess of complete being and the black stain, between Crow and his birdness. It seems to me to be the self-same exchange between mourning and living, then and now. I could learn a lot from him. (27)

A careful reading of the above quote may enable one to recognize how Dad reduce if not erase the line of demarcation between human superiority and animals' inferiority. This is enhanced by the way Dad admits Crow's civilized self that promotes him to a level of equality if not superiority. Even the possibility of learning from Crow suggests this level of equality. This, in fact goes against what is stated in Descartes' writing in which one can recognize that human language identified the rational superiority of human being in comparison to the irrational inferiority of animals who are unable to express themselves in a meaningful way because when they are asked for something or about something they cannot respond due to the fact that the questions are constructed in a form of communication from which all animals are excluded. The outcome is a situation where nonhuman creatures are seen as not having as much self-awareness as humans, which has serious consequences for their own survival. Because of this, they have no way of connecting with others on a deep, meaningful level or vice versa. Again, the novella presents an antithesis to the above one.

Crow actualizes its being in the house to the extent that the boys establish a bridge of comprehension between them and Crow:

Crow is in the bathroom, where he often is because he likes the acoustics. We are crouched by the closed door listening. He is speaking very slowly, very clearly. He sounds old-fashioned, like Dad's vinyl recording of Dylan Thomas. He says SUDDEN. He says TRAUMA. He says Induced ... he coughs and spits and tries again, INDUCED. He says SUDDEN TRAUMA INDUCED ALTERATION OF THE ALERT STATE. (28)

Crow becomes the mother of the house. He himself absorbs this role:

I loved waiting, mid-afternoon, alone in their home, for them to come back from school. I acknowledge that I could have been accused of showing symptoms related to unfulfilled maternal fantasies, but I am a crow and we can do many things in the dark, even play at Mommy. I just pecked about, looking at this, looking at that. Lifting up the occasional sock or jigsaw piece. I used to do little squitty shits in places I knew he'd never clean. (62)

Caring for a young, vulnerable kid reveals both his humanity and his majesty, making it a formative experience. Crow goes through several episodes of losing and regaining his sense of self. This is a great opportunity to learn how to engage with everyone who has an impact on children, as well as to discover one's own perspective on the external world:

There is a beautiful lazy swagger to tired little men, they roll and flump and crash down in the interlude before beginning to scavenge for food or entertainment, and I was always filled with uncharacteristic optimism and good cheer watching them slouch unselfconsciously back into their roost. And sugar! On the evenings when he gave them treats, or they climbed up to the cupboard and plundered – crow-like – their father's stash. If you haven't observed human children after serious quantities of sugar, you must. It raises and deranges them, hilariously, for an hour or so, and then they slump. (62)

According to Descartes, individuals who observe non-human animals can identify two distinct characteristics that differentiate them from human actions. These include their lack of response and their inability to imitate human behavior. Peter Harrison in his "Descartes on Animals" (1992) confirms that Descartes identified "animals as automata, and denied them thought and self-consciousness" (220) Thus, it was impossible for anyone to accurately assess whether genuine emotions or passions resided within them. Porter, however, challenges this perspective. Dad confirms:

Every time I sit down and look at my notes Crow appears in my office. Sometimes slouched on the floor, resting on one wing ('Look! I'm the Venus of Corvino!'), sometimes patiently perched on my shoulder advising me ('Is that fair on Baskin, really?'). Most of the time he is happy to sit curled in the armchair quietly reading, wheezing. He flicks through picture books and poetry collections, tutting and sighing. He has no time for novels. He only picks up history books to label great men fuckwits or curse the church. He enjoys memoirs and was delighted to discover the book about a Scottish woman who adopted a rook. (31)

This as confirmed above goes against Descartes perspectives who points out that when individuals observe non-human animals, they can identify two distinct characteristics that set them apart from human actions. These factors encompass their unresponsiveness and their incapacity to replicate human behavior. Therefore, it was incredibly challenging for anyone to make an accurate assessment of whether authentic emotions or passions existed within them. (Derrida 2008, p 84)

Crow, however, as presented by Porter, is an exception in a sense that he is capable of creating stories that reflect on animals' passions and experiences. Creating a story is an art form. An art form that involves conveying a piece of significant information to an audience via the use of story communication. Through the use of the power of narrative, storytelling is able to communicate a message, share an experience, and so on. In other words, there is a bridge that is created between the audience and the subject matter via the use of storytelling, which enables the audience to connect on a more personal level. The information that one provides e via the telling of a tale is processed by his\her brain, which then transforms it into a narrative. Therefore, tales are the way one thinks, the way one recalls tales, and the way one transforms his\her experiences into stories. As such, Crow's stories entail his skillful way of expressing and emphasizing his being:

Once upon a time there was a demon who fed on grief. The delicious aroma of raw shock and unexpected loss came wafting from the doors and windows of a widower's sad home. Therefore the demon set about finding his way in. One evening the babes were freshly washed and the husband was telling them tales when there was a knock on the door. (54)

The power of storytelling is appreciated by Dad to the extent that Crow deserves to be placed in front of Ted Hugh about whom Dad writes a book:

Dear Crow,

Today I drew a picture I am really proud of. It's a picture of you, sitting on a chair, with a hand-puppet of Ted. Opposite you is Ted, sitting on a chair, with a hand-puppet of you. The likeness is superb! Ted's hand-puppet Crow has a speech bubble. The Crow puppet is saying 'TED, YOU STINK OF A BUTCHER'S SHOP.' I think you'd love it. (59)

By the end of his adventure, Crow asks the permission to leave. His roles as a therapist, doctor, teacher, storyteller, inspirator, and mother fulfilled their objectives that are to heal the wounds of Dad and Boys loss and to enable them to accept what is decided for them by God. It is not only Crow who achieves his final goal, but Porter as well succeeds to reflect on an anti-speciesism perspective which resists what is described by Spigel as a system of slave-owner:

The realization that animals we enslave, the animals we turn into things, the animals who slave for us that we might eat some luxury from their bodies, are alive, are as possessive of their lives as you or I, this realization would throw a wrench into the system. If this realization were reached, people would have to change an aspect of their life style, and this is why many people resist thinking about it, resist questioning the system, and fail to know the obvious which greatly pleases the slave-owner, those who directly profit from the lives of animals and from our passive and active acceptance of slavery and oppression. For if individuals did question it, and refused to participate any longer, the system would collapse. (92)

One must not forget that human and animals are the same in death and suffering. They got the same pain when they are violated and their blood is spilled and confront the same stench of death, the brutal and barbaric taking of life.

### Conclusion:

The central theme of the work revolved on the phenomenon of loss and the subsequent repercussions of the resulting trauma. Nevertheless, a meticulous examination of the literary work prompts the reader to scrutinize the crow's persona and the many functions he assumed as a psychologist, physician, companion, wellspring of motivation, and surrogate for the maternal figure. The healing power of Crow enables the whole family members to readjust their new life. This is recognized in the way their tone and verbal language transform the borders of melancholy. The crow was allocated these tasks in accordance with the premise of identifying the researcher's species, with the intention of challenging the notion of objectifying non-human species and subjecting them to persecution and violence. Due to the inherent meaning of language and its relatedness to comprehending consciousness, identity, and self-expression, the writer has the potential to use language to transcend the constraints of negating the existence of non-human beings in the world and disregarding their entitlement to life. During the investigation of the work's outcomes and its structure, it was seen that the author used a language that included both the eloquence and tactics of poetry, as well as the concise language of prose. Therefore, the inclusion of variety in the novella contributes to its experimental character and effectively conveys the message against species bias, with the ultimate goal of fostering harmonious cohabitation among many species. This variety included not just the language used, but also encompassed the story itself, the characters involved, and their metamorphosis as a result of the traumatic event they endured. All these means of representation prove the anti-speciesism perspective that zoo criticism is based upon and which Porter believes in consciously or unconsciously.

## مناهضة التمييز النوعي وطاقة الحيوانات الشفائية: دراسة نقدية من منظور النقد الحيواني في رواية الحزن شي ذو ريش

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الكلمات المفتاحية | مناهضة التمييز بين الأنواع، الحزن، العلاقة الإنسانية الحيوانية، ماكس بورتر، النقد الحيواني.



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### ملخص البحث:

تثير الحيوانات مشاعر مختلفة لدى أشخاص مختلفين. ولأن بعض الناس لا يهتمون بالأنواع غير البشرية فأهم يستغلونهم ويعاملونهم بوحشية. ومع ذلك تستعرض هذه الدراسة موقفاً مناهضاً للتمييز بين الأنواع وتبحث في الروابط التي قد يشاركها البشر والحيوانات وبالتحديد عندما يساعد الحيوان الأشخاص على التعامل مع صعوبات الحسارة والفقدان. يتناول البحث بالنقد والتحليل وبالاعتماد على نظرية النقد الحيواني التي تقع ضمن نطاق النقد البيئي رواية ماكس بورتر والموسومة الحزن شيء ذو ريش. تفترض الدراسة أن رواية بورتر تقدم وجهة نظر مناهضة للتمييز بين الأنواع من خلال تقديم الطائر، أي الغراب، ككائن قوي قادر على شفاء الحزن. وبالعودة لمفهوم التمييز بين الأنواع نجد أن تمثيل الغراب يتجاوز حدود الآخريّة والصمت والتشبيء. على هذا النحو، يعد كتاب غراهام هوغان وهيلين تيفين والموسوم النقد البيئي ما بعد الاستعماري: الأدب والحيوانات والبيئة مصدراً رئيسياً في هذه الدراسة، إلى جانب الأعمال النقدية الأخرى في العلوم الإنسانية البيئية والدراسات الحيوانية التي تركز على الحيوان والروحانية والأدوار المتغيرة للإنسان والحيوان في "عالم ما بعد الإنسان". ومن ثم تجيب الدراسة على أسئلة العلاقة بين الإنسان والحيوان، وتمثيلها الأدبي في رواية بورتر. تنبع أهمية الدراسة من الحاجة إلى وقف التمييز ضد الحيوانات ومعاملتها بدلاً من ذلك باعتبارها ذات قيمة جوهرية.