

Proxies and Prostheses: Stray dogs from Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1845) to Jane Campion's *The Piano* (1992)

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Abstract: This essay compares six dogs who appear in the margins of four texts and two films, examining how they serve in the narratives as proxies or prostheses for plot and character. The first pair are from the two versions of Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1845 and 1869) and feature at key turning-points in the protagonist's life. The next pair are kindly female dogs tricked by their male masters, J. M. Barrie's Mr Darling and André Gide. The last two dogs serve as prostheses rather than proxies; each belonging to the daughter of a couple riven by adultery and supplementing the daughter's activity as mediator and disrupter of desire. How is silence the precondition for the dog's meaning in these texts?

Keywords: Dogs, proxies, prostheses, fictions of adultery, *Fatal Attraction*, *The Piano*, Flaubert, Barrie, Gide

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*und die findigen Tiere merken es schon,
daß wir nicht sehr verläßlich zu Haus sind
in der gedeuteten Welt.¹
And the resourceful animals are aware
That we are not very reliably at home
In the interpreted world.*

The film hit of five years ago was unquestionably *The Artist* (dir. Michel Hazanavicius, 2011), in which there were three stars: the dazzling Jean Dujardin, the whole question of silence, and the dog Uggie. Uggie had his own Wikipedia page, and many entries on Google, including pieces about a “mystery shaking syndrome” which began blighting him just when, as his owner/trainer Omar Von Muller wrote, he was “getting the biggest success of his career, but we feel the best thing to do is to retire him after the Oscars”.² He lived on after retirement but died by euthanasia on 7 August 2015.

There was much discussion at the time about the right of a clever dog (Uggie had two stunt doubles, painted to look like him, called Dash & Dude, “but Uggie did most of his own stunts and the doubles were barely required”) to be awarded a prize equal to that of a human star. A Facebook campaign launched by the aptly named S. T. Van Airsdale, who argued that “the dog outperformed Leonardo DiCaprio’s performance in *J. Edgar* but probably wasn’t as good as George Clooney in *The Descendants*”. The cast and crew backed the campaign and but BAFTA responded: ““Regretfully, we must advise that as he is not a human being and his unique motivation as an actor was sausages, Uggie is not qualified to compete for the Bafta in [the category of Best Actor]””.³

I began by saying there were three stars: the man, the dog and silence. Like Jane Campion’s Ada, whom we shall consider soon, both this man and this dog needed silence in order to communicate. The man’s reasons were complex: it may be that “George Valentin”, as the final twist implied, was afraid of revealing his non-American nationality (this did not seem to be a problem for his female co-star), or it may be that the audience needed to learn alternatives to the noise-effect of speech, as we charmingly and quite speedily did in our 2011 cinemas. But with the dog, of course, a failure to speak is mandatory and definitional. When a house is on fire, Uggie the dog must get the attention of a lazy policemen by being as

¹ Rilke, *Duineser Elegien* I: lines 11–13.

NB Unless otherwise noted, all translations from French or German in this essay are my own, and reference is given to the original text (- N.S.).

² <https://www.yahoo.com/movies/bp/uggie-dog-artist-suffering-mystery-shaking-syndrome-192711535.html> (accessed 27 April 2016).

³ All quotations in this paragraph are from the Wikipedia page <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uggie>.

importunate as Mme Arnoux's dream pup or real child, and he finally succeeds – with the help of a kindly lady. Remember Babar the elephant's "rich old lady":

*Luckily, he was seen by
a very rich old lady
who understood
little elephants,
and knew at once
that he was longing for
a smart suit.
She loved making others happy,
so she gave him
her purse.*

*"Thank you, Madam",
said Babar.⁴*

This kind of happy conversation does not occur in any of my examples. The six animal instances that follow appear on a spectrum from anthropomorphism to neglect, but the dogs make their impact without a word being said.

At a talk I heard in 2010 in a conference on literature, biopolitics & the body, the speaker began by saying: "Many people who do research in disability studies are not themselves disabled. But when it comes to those researching in animal studies... every one of them is an animal".⁵ The surprise this caused me – and others – made me think of picking up six marginal dogs (three pairs, from texts and films) who had crept into the footnotes of earlier publications of mine, and now pay them some direct attention. Why were they so marginal & what were they actually doing?

I want to suggest that it is the role of the dog to be ignored at moments when the human character is psychologically intent on something unspeakable or unspoken, so that elements of the bodily experience of a character are displaced and redeployed; and it is the role of the reader or viewer to see into and through the dog almost without noticing it is there. Even those dogs that do seem to be briefly at the centre of events are so only to puzzle and distract. I shall discuss my three pairs under three rubrics, representing different versions of canine presence.⁶ My conclusion will be that in a variety of modes and contexts, the dogs serve as either proxies or prostheses – or as something combining elements of both functions.

⁴ Jean de Brunhoff, 11.

⁵ Roland Borgards, in the introduction to his paper, "The Poetics and Politics of Animals. Animal Studies between Life Sciences and Humanities" given to the Cultural Literacy in Europe Workshop on *Biopolitics, Biosociality & the Body*, St Gallen, August 2010. See also Borgards, *Tiere. Ein kulturwissenschaftliches Handbuch* and, for an excellent introduction in English, his "Introduction: Cultural and literary animal studies", *JLT* 9/2 (2015), 155-160.

⁶ At the time of the paper on which this essay is based, delivered in Sofia at the conference on *The Inhuman 2015* in December 2015, I had time to cover only two pairs of dogs, and the middle section of this essay was omitted.

Flaubert's dogs

My first dog appears in the original version of Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale*, written in 1845. One of the two protagonists, Jules, is walking in the country, thinking big thoughts about time, nature, love and his own painful existence. Then...

Il entendit quelque chose courir dans l'herbe, il se retourna, et tout à coup un chien s'élança sur lui, en jappant et en lui léchant les mains; la voix de cette bête était glapissante et traînarde, et sanglotait dans ses hurlements. Elle était maigre, efflanquée comme une louve, elle avait l'air sauvage et malheureux; toute salie par la boue, sa peau galeuse à certaines places était à peine couverte d'un poil rare et long moitié blanc et noir, et elle boitait d'une jambe de derrière; ses yeux se fixaient sur Jules avec une curiosité effrayante et parcouraient toute sa personne, tout en le flairant et en tournant autour de lui.

Jules en eut d'abord horreur, puis pitié, tant le pauvre animal semblait misérable et abandonné. C'était un de ces chiens qui ont perdu leur maître, que l'on poursuit avec des huées, qui errent au hasard dans la campagne, que l'on trouve morts au bord des chemins sans savoir à qui ils appartenaient. Jules le chassa, mais il revint à la charge; il le menaça encore, ne voulant pas le battre, mais la bête bondit à sa voix et le caressa plus fort; à la fin il ramassa une pierre et la lui lança dans les flancs; elle poussa un cri plaintif, et, la queue dans les jambes, rampant sur le sol et tirant la langue, elle vint se cacher dans ses genoux sans en vouloir sortir.⁷

According to Jonathan Culler:

the famous encounter between Jules and the dog, which occupies Chapter XXVI, is narrated with unusual assurance & consistency. [...] Readers agree that this is the most effective chapter of the book, and indeed the incident exercises a fascination on critics, who are drawn back to it to offer their explications.⁸

Culler claims that the key importance of the scene is the way it is anchored at an uncanny but strongly stressed turning-point. Jules cannot shake the dog off. The same ambivalence colours the rest of the encounter – “repoussé par sa laideur, Jules s'efforçait de ne pas la [bête] voir, mais une attraction invincible attirait ses yeux sur elle” [repelled by its hideousness, Jules tried

⁷ Flaubert, Gustave, *Œuvres complètes* vol 1 (ed. by Bernard Masson). Paris: Seuil, 1964, 351.

He heard something running in the grass, turned round, and suddenly a dog leapt at him, yapping and licking his hands; the animal's voice was sharp yet drawling, sobbing amid its barks. It was thin, raw-boned as a she-wolf, and it looked wild and miserable: filthy with mud, its scabby skin was barely covered by a few tufts of long black-and-white hair, and one of its back legs limped; its eyes were fixed on Jules with a baleful curiosity, looking him up and down while it sniffed at him from all sides.

At first Jules felt loathing, then pity, it looked so pathetic and abandoned. It was one of those dogs that have lost their masters; shooed and booed away, they wander around the countryside and you find them dead by the side of the road with no way of knowing whose they are. He chased it away but it came bounding back; he shouted threats, not wanting to hit it, but the dog jumped up at the sound of his voice, more eager than ever; in the end he took a stone and threw it at its flanks; it let out a piteous yelp and, with its tail between its legs, belly on the ground and tongue stuck out, it took shelter at his knees and would not come out.

⁸ Culler, Jonathan, *Flaubert: The Uses of Uncertainty*. London: Elek, 1974, 62.

not to look at it, but his eyes were irresistibly drawn back to it],⁹ and “[la bête] lui envoya un regard si doux, si doux, qu’il sentit son cœur s’attendrir, malgré la terreur qui l’assiégeait” [It gazed at him with such a gentle, sweet look that he felt his heart melting, despite the terror overwhelming him]¹⁰ – which, however, gets more and more intense. He fancies it may be a puppy he once gave to a girlfriend that has come to a sad end. The dog follows, then leads, drawing the man towards a bridge where, perhaps, someone has died; then suddenly it bursts into a paroxysm of sharp, hoarse barking, which shakes its whole body: “ces sons furieux, plaintifs et frénétiques tout ensemble” [these raging howls, plaintive and frantic at the same time],¹¹ while Jules tries desperately to understand “ce langage plus muet pour lui qu’une porte fermée” [its language, which to him was as mute as a closed door].¹² Finally the dog seems to focus on him with baleful intensity, with a human gaze; they seem mirror-images of each other, daring each other into a battle neither can win.

Jules runs through the suburbs, then the town, heads up to his room and changes out of his soaking clothes; nothing (the text says “no one”) seems to be following him. Later, “pour tenter le vertige, pour voir s’il y serait le plus fort” [to test his terror, to see if he would come out on top],¹³ he goes downstairs and opens the door – and “le chien était couché sur le seuil.” [there the dog was, lying in the doorway].¹⁴ At this point the chapter ends, and chapter XXVII begins with the words: “Ce fut son dernier jour de pathétique; depuis, il se corrigea de ses peurs superstitieuses et ne s’effraya pas de rencontrer des chiens galeux dans la campagne” [That was his last pathetic day; thereafter he was cured of his superstitious terrors and no longer afraid of finding mangy dogs on his path when out walking in the country].¹⁵ In Culler’s view the weight attached by critics to the figure of this dog derives not least from the hiatus between chapters, a black hole in which some significance has been secreted: “We are told that an important change has taken place, but the final crisis, the wrestling with the angel, is not described”.¹⁶ He goes on: “if we think about the incident in an empirical mode we can, as Sartre says, imagine almost anything happening on his seeing the dog, except his calmly closing the door”.¹⁷ But “this is not the question critics ask; they do not, for the most part, try

⁹ Flaubert, *Œuvres*, 352. It is noteworthy that the pronominal gender varies according to whether the noun referred back to is masculine (“l’animal”, “la chien”) or feminine (“la bête”). This of course is not the same as Barrie’s odd use of gender for the crocodile.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 352.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 353.

¹² *Ibid.*, 353.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 354.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 354.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 354.

¹⁶ Culler, 62.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 62.

to explain what happened; their efforts are directed almost entirely on the problem of the dog as symbol".¹⁸ Why might this be? "We take from the crisis, as it is presented, only a sense of the mystery and importance which we transfer to the dog itself".¹⁹

Culler's reading of the uselessness of both the critics' and the character's desperate wish to assimilate this creature to some interpretative shaping of experience leads to the conclusion that it is its very unassimilability that makes it resonant; it is "a dialectical excess, [...] that which always exceeds the interpretations which it provokes".²⁰ In this sense it is as material (that is, indigestible, particularly indigestible to the intelligence) as anything in a verbal artefact can be, "something which is still there in all its concreteness, as a *signifiant* calling for meaning, however much one tries to attach to it a *signifié* which will integrate it in a discourse".²¹ Culler solves the problem by a "quite literal reading of the scene" which,²² unlike the strained symbolism of other critics, permits a formal integration of the event, not the dog, into the text's effects.

My problem with this reading is that it evokes the same reservation as all other "dialectical excesses" in fiction: however much they stick in our intellectual throat by dint of their materiality – Culler's other key examples are Charles Bovary's hat and Emma's wedding-cake: impossibly over-described things that could never be worn or eaten – they are made of verbal, not material stuff. It is not simply that fictitious things belong in the universe of artefacts but that they can only be "swallowed" or confronted in a world of representability. What does it add to this impossibility if the fictional thing is animate, emits sound and movement, and the demand of a gaze?

All that is clear is that this dog, together with the event that it stages, is a proxy for a momentous effect that exceeds it. To amplify this idea of the proxy, I'd like to confront it with another dog in another *Éducation sentimentale*, published twenty-four years later in 1869. The hero is now called Frédéric, he is seeking his fortune in Paris and from the first page he has been in love in typical Flaubertian style with a married woman, the mother of a daughter and a son. After endless careful negotiations, he has persuaded her to meet him at two pm the following day at the corner of the rue Tronchet, where he has prepared a love-nest. There are hints that the 1848 revolution is about to break out; but our hero has other fish to fry. Unfortunately the lovely Mme Arnoux never turns up. This is why.

¹⁸ Ibid, 63.

¹⁹ Ibid, 63.

²⁰ Ibid, 65.

²¹ Ibid, 65.

²² Ibid, 66.

Elle avait rêvé, la nuit précédente, qu'elle était sur le trottoir de la rue Tronchet depuis longtemps. Elle y attendant quelque chose d'indéterminé, de considérable néanmoins, et, sans savoir pourquoi, elle avait peur d'être aperçue. Mais un maudit petit chien, acharné contre elle, mordillait le bas de sa robe. Il revenait obstinément et aboyait toujours plus fort. Mme Arnoux se réveilla. L'aboiement du chien continuait. Elle tendit l'oreille. Cela partait de la chambre de son fils. Elle s'y précipita pieds nus. C'était l'enfant lui-même qui toussait. Il avait les mains brûlantes, la face rouge et la voix singulièrement rauque. L'embarras de sa respiration augmentait de minute en minute. Elle resta jusqu'au jour, penchée sur sa couverture, à l'observer.²³

This dream fits Freud's first and simplest category of dreams: the "dream of convenience", which is precipitated by external stimuli:²⁴ the sleeper wishes above all to go on sleeping, so the stimulus is integrated into the actions of a dream. In this case, Mme Arnoux's agoraphobia allows her to street-walk at the price of not knowing whom or what she is waiting for, and also at the price (here Flaubert bends down over her as she will over her conscience incarnate) of the guilt rhythmically calling her to wakefulness.

The test constituted by the illness of the (actual or potential) adulteress's son was one of the main themes of my book *The Adulteress's Child* (1992); it is typical of nineteenth-century novels of adultery written by male authors. Stendhal kindly lets Mme de Rênal and Julien Sorel off this particular hook;²⁵ Flaubert is familiarly more hard-hearted. The boy coughs all night long; a couple of useless doctors turn up; child and mother suffer grotesquely until, at dawn, he vomits up the croupous membrane, "quelque chose d'étrange, qui ressemblait à un tube de parchemin"²⁶ [something strange, which looked like a tube of parchment] – an interesting combination of phallus and scroll of testament – and is saved; and moments later she offers up to God "comme un holocauste, le sacrifice de sa première passion, de sa seule faiblesse"²⁷ [as a holocaust, the sacrifice of her first passion, her only weakness].

So – what do these two Flaubertian dogs have in common? They are both in a way hounds of either heaven or hell. They pluck at the protagonists' hearts and hems and force

²³ Gustave Flaubert, *L'Éducation sentimentale* ed. by Michael Wetherill. Paris: Garnier, 1984 [1869], 280.

The previous night, she dreamt that she had been standing for some time on the pavement of the rue Tronchet. She was waiting for something vague but extremely important and, without knowing why, she was afraid of being seen. But a horrible little dog, which had taken a dislike to her, was nibbling at the hem of her dress. He would not go away and barked louder and louder. Mme Arnoux woke up. The barking was still going on. She listened: it was coming from her son's bedroom. Barefoot, she rushed in. It was the child himself, coughing. His hands were burning, his face was scarlet and his voice curiously hoarse. His difficulty in breathing increased minute by minute. Until dawn she stayed there, bent over his coverlet, watching him.

²⁴ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, ed. and tr. James Strachey et al., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol IV. London: Hogarth [Vintage] 2001 [1953], 133ff. Freud's original term is "Bequemlichkeitsträume", see *Die Traumdeutung* [1900], in eds. Marie Bonaparte and Anna Freud, *Gesammelte Werke* vols II/III. Frankfurt: Fischer 1999 [1942], 129ff.

²⁵ In Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le noir* [1830], ed. by Pierre Castex. Paris: Garnier, 1973, 107ff.

²⁶ Flaubert, *L'Éducation*, 282.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 282.

them directly or indirectly to change direction. Jules's dog has to remain unexplained; Mme Arnoux's (which is, in a sense, thus also Frédéric's) is over-determined, standing for the conflicts of adulterous desire. Both these dogs bark in animal mode and gaze in quasi-human mode, as though they knew something essential. In the other two pairs we shall see more of this proxy-role played by dogs who seem to know more than they can express.

Who's master

My next two dogs reveal in their unexpected parallel what happens when a man chooses to behave badly to an innocent (or even virtuous) creature temporarily in his charge. One of these men is fictional, the other historical. They are: J. M. Barrie's Mr Darling and André Gide.

Both Gide and Barrie were fascinated by boys and birds, and by the metamorphoses – and parallels – between these two kinds of barely tameable creatures. To seduce is, obscurely, also to educate: to bring the desired object close, into a physical or psychological cage, to flirt with the other's unassimilable freedom.²⁸ But, in the margins of this desire, something different is going on with a pair of female dogs whose earthbound mixture of goodwill, great-heartedness and stupidity brings the worst out in a supposedly intelligent man.

In *Peter Pan and Wendy* (1911), the children of the Darling family are cared for by a nanny who is a “prim”,²⁹ loving Newfoundland dog called Nana. This creature may have been based on Barrie's own St Bernard, Porthos, a wedding present to his wife Mary, though it is also said that she is based on Luath, in appearance at least, another male Newfoundland dog that they owned later.³⁰ It is also worth remembering that the devilish Captain Hook was always played by the same actor as Mr Darling, beginning with the first performance in 1904, when they were acted by Gerald du Maurier, the son of George du Maurier, father of Daphne du Maurier and brother of Sylvia Llewellyn Davies, the mother of the five beautiful boys at the origin of *Peter Pan*.

Mr Darling has always been a little “troubled” by having a dog as the children's nurse, wondering “uneasily whether the neighbours talked [given that] he had his position in the city

²⁸ See Naomi Segal, ‘André Gide et les garçons perdus’, in the *Bulletin des Amis d'André Gide* no 131/132 (xxxiv^e année – vol XXIX), juillet-octobre 2001, 355-77; for more on Gide's desire see Naomi Segal, *André Gide: Pederasty & Pedagogy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

²⁹ J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan & Wendy* London: Michael Joseph, 1988 [1911], 11.

³⁰ One of the many parallels between Gide and Barrie is the fact that both reputedly had *mariages blancs*; another – see Segal, *André Gide*, chapter 8 – is their creation (along with Lewis Carroll) of a pair of quasi-siblings: an older, serious fair-haired girl and a brown-haired younger boy who has all the “naughtiness” she lacks.

to consider”.³¹ One evening, embarrassed by his unwillingness to take some medicine to show his youngest son Michael how fearless he is, thinks of a “splendid joke”³² to play on Nana.

“Nana, good dog”, he said, patting her, “I have put a little milk into your bowl, Nana.”

Nana wagged her tail, ran to the medicine, and began lapping it. Then she gave Mr Darling such a look, not an angry look: she showed him the great red tear that makes us so sorry for noble dogs, and crept into her kennel.

Mr Darling was frightfully ashamed of himself, but he would not give in. In a horrid silence Mrs Darling smelt the bowl. “O George,” she said, “it’s your medicine!”

“It was only a joke,” he roared, while she comforted her boys and Wendy hugged Nana. “Much good,” he said bitterly, “my wearing myself to the bone trying to be funny in this house. [...] I refuse to allow that dog to lord it in my nursery for an hour longer.”

He was determined to show who was master in that house, and when commands would not draw Nana from the kennel, he lured her out of it with honeyed words, and seizing her roughly, dragged her from the nursery. He was ashamed of himself, and yet he did it. It was all owing to his affectionate nature, which craved for admiration. When he had tied her up in the back yard, the wretched father went and sat in the passage, with his knuckles to his eyes.³³

Of course, this is the reason that Peter Pan is able to abduct the Darling children without getting caught – without which there would be no lost boys and girls, but also, as the narrator points out, “no story”.³⁴ In fact, much like Flaubert’s dogs, Nana barks out a warning when Peter is coming for the children, and sensitive Wendy alerts her mother: “That is not Nana’s unhappy bark,” she said, little guessing what was about to happen; “that is her bark when she smells danger”.³⁵ But no one listens to her and later, in remorse, Mr Darling takes to living in Nana’s kennel, where he is visited by a curious press and public, in a remarkably prescient detail.

Peter Pan and Wendy is full of elements of indeterminacy. We have already seen how the figure of Mr Darling crosses with that of Captain Hook, as the extreme of domesticated, rather foolish fatherhood propagates a dream-image of cruel, dangerous and sexy masculinity; we shall see in a moment how the latter incorporates elements of the feminine as well. Overlaid on this is the cross-over between animal and human: no explanation is given for the metamorphosis of a big dog based on two real-life male dogs into a female one in the guise of the strict-but-fair nanny; but once he has mistreated her, her employer takes the animal role, by settling into her kennel, which is transported every day to his place of work, pleasingly pursued by journalists. “whatever Mr Darling did he had to do in excess; otherwise he soon gave up doing it. And there never was a more humble man than the once proud George

³¹ Barrie, 12.

³² Ibid, 23.

³³ Ibid, 24.

³⁴ Ibid, 39.

Darling, as he sat in the kennel of an evening talking with his wife of their children and all their pretty ways”.³⁶

The indeterminacy of human and animal (human-bird crossovers also abound, as in Barrie’s other fiction) runs in parallel with an indeterminacy of generations – Wendy quickly becomes the only mother her brothers can remember – and, most significantly, of gender. Captain Hook, by dint of his excessive, Etonian masculinity, also exemplifies a certain gamut of femininity: he can be gallant, “entrancing” and “fascinating” the little girl Wendy;³⁷ he can be sensitive, loving “flowers (I have been told) and sweet music”;³⁸ and above all, “in his dark nature there was a touch of the feminine, as in all the great pirates”.³⁹ And his obsessive companion and nemesis, the crocodile, is similarly fluid of gender: this creature is successively represented as “she”,⁴⁰ “it”⁴¹ and “him”.⁴² Peter, whose character veers across ages and identities, being both the only one who can locate Mrs Darling’s special kiss⁴³ and something “very like” it himself,⁴⁴ is also capable of imitating the voices of Hook and a range of animals, from the benign Neverbird to the terrorising crocodile. Thus in *Peter Pan*, and not only because of the dream-story and tone of whimsy, fluidity of embodiment is standard.

Here is another faithful female dog, another trick and another reproachful audience of women. How does Gide assert his male pride in similar circumstances to Mr Darling in the fatal scene of the medicine?

*En parlant de l'éducation des animaux, il raconte que le fait le plus curieux qu'il ait observé chez sa chienne Miquette, dont il s'était beaucoup occupé, est celui-ci: ayant à lui faire prendre de l'huile de ricin, comme elle résistait, il imagina de lui faire faire d'abord certain tour, après quoi elle obtenait toujours une récompense, puis de lui présenter la drogue. La bête n'hésita pas un instant et certaine qu'on ne pouvait à ce moment lui donner qu'une chose qu'elle aimait, avala l'huile sans dégoût. "Admirable preuve de foi!" dit-il. Comme j'étais prête à épouser l'indignation de Madeleine qu'il nous racontait, il me dit: "Mais non, il n'y a pas lieu; ça fait partie de la religion du chien".*⁴⁵

³⁵ Ibid, 25.

³⁶ Ibid, 142.

³⁷ Ibid, 113

³⁸ Ibid, 117

³⁹ Ibid, 82.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 55

⁴¹ Ibid, 57, 59 and 130

⁴² Ibid, 94

⁴³ Ibid, 9, 20 and 145

⁴⁴ Ibid, 16

⁴⁵ Maria Van Rysselberghe, *Les Cahiers de la Petite Dame 1918–1929, Cahiers André Gide* vol 4. Paris: Gallimard 1973, 171 (February 1923).

He was talking about how to educate animals, and told us the most curious fact he had observed about his bitch Miquette, whom he had spent a lot of time training. When he needed to make her take some cod-liver oil, and she refused, it occurred to him to get her to do a certain trick which was always followed by a reward, and then to put the medicine in front of her. The animal did not hesitate for an instant, convinced that at a moment like that she could only be given something she liked, and she swallowed the oil without disgust. "What an

The main difference is the lack of recognition on Gide's part that he has done anything mean, combined with a lofty sense of his moral position as godlike educator. The narrator of this incident, Maria Van Rysselberghe, lacks towards him the sort of whimsical irony that makes Barrie's critique of domestic manhood telling. Another of Gide's biographers, Pierre Herbart, is less sympathetic. He recounts in a note how Gide shocked a young visitor by explaining that if he accidentally stepped on the paw of a dog that he had been given to train, or caught its tail in a door, "je le corrigeais aussitôt pour lui donner le sentiment de la faute – de sa faute à lui, vous comprenez?" Mais s'agit-il là d'égoïsme?" ["I would immediately punish it, to give it a sense of guilt – *its own* guilt, you understand?" But was this a case of egoism?], Herbart puzzles.⁴⁶ To which we would have to reply: not exactly. Education always has the appearance of a gift, even when it is more precisely an imposition. Selfishness is only indirectly at stake in the spectacle of the pupil who has learned to teach him/herself. But the religious dog can have only one possible deity: its master.

Who's master of the dog, then? And which of these paternal figures is master of himself? Mr Darling's exploitation of the dog as proxy is clearer than that of Gide, but they are both making use of the goodness of the canine other, disguised as gullibility, and coopted for the value that gullibility can offer the unscrupulous human "educator". At the end of *Peter Pan*, when the children are back and Mrs Darling agrees to adopt the Lost Boys, Mr Darling becomes "curiously depressed".⁴⁷ The twins offer to go away and Wendy is shocked; yet "still the cloud was on him. He knew he was behaving unworthily, but he could not help it".⁴⁸ He bursts into tears and admits it is just that "they should have asked his consent as well as [his wife's], instead of treating him as a cypher in his own house".⁴⁹

All characters – all textual objects – are cyphers. Even a historical figure, reproduced and recalled by biographers, is a cypher in textuality, as are all verbal bodies, whether clad in skin or fur. Arguably we are all cyphers in our actions towards others, all the more when we aspire to having control over them. So the ways in which animals stand in as proxies for the fantasies and fears of their owners, in these two cases separated by gender as well as power, is a displacement as much as it is a transfer or negotiation.

admirable proof of faith!" he said. I was about to share the indignant reaction of Madeleine, which he described to us, when he said: "No, no, you're quite wrong: it is part of a dog's religion!"

⁴⁶ Pierre Herbart, *A la Recherche d'André Gide*. Paris: Gallimard, 1952, 51n.

⁴⁷ Barrie, 148

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 149.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 149.

Slurping

In my third pair of dogs, the use of a proxy is multiplied in space, as the animals extend a prosthetic relation between conflicted parents and their daughter.⁵⁰ The issue is once again adulterous desire, and the dogs appear once more at the margins, this time of two films of the late twentieth century which are both oddly parallel and, in other ways, remarkably different from each other.

In *Fatal Attraction* (dir. Adrian Lyne, 1987) and *The Piano* (dir. Jane Campion, 1992), the adulterous triangle is amplified by the presence of a daughter who serves both to mediate and to disrupt the progress of the protagonists' desire. The films contrast in many ways, not least in their tones, endings, differently-gendered focalisation, use of melodrama or understatement, flirtation with opposing versions of resurrection and tragedy. The use of the daughters to carry or interrupt messages, to know and not know, varies just as significantly. But each daughter also has a dog, and the dog bears witness both to the child's exclusion or confusion and to the antics of the adulterous couple from which the spouse is excluded. At key comic moments each of these dogs slurps significantly.

What is the difference between a proxy and a prosthesis? A proxy stands in, with one kind of equivalence or another, for something or someone else. Flaubert's two dogs play their part in the protagonists' anxieties and desire. Nana and Mr Darling change roles, neither exactly fulfilling their function in relation to the children; Gide's dog is used to make him a kind of god. But the relation of the dogs in the two films to the humans they live with to is a different one, not least because of the way in which they extend those humans' story at a remove from the central drama. In both these film narratives the daughter's role as mediator or emissary is supplemented by that of her dog.

Why a daughter? In fictions of adultery, the beloved is a mother and she may have sons or daughters; we have already seen what happens to the mother of sons. The mother of a daughter in the traditional male-authored novel of adultery is already implicitly outlawed by the birth of a child, whether legitimate or illegitimate, who does not offer her the iconic gratification of a Mary or a Jocasta but rather the vicious circle of "only" being able/permitted to reproduce herself. The clearest example is in Flaubert (again), whose Emma Bovary, after giving birth, frustrated of the vicarious satisfaction of having a son, turns to the wall and faints. In *Madame Bovary*, *Anna Karenina*, *The Scarlet Letter* and *Effi Briest*, all

⁵⁰ See also Naomi Segal, 'Daughters, dogs and death: triangular desire in *Fatal Attraction*, *The Piano* and *The Talented Mr Ripley*', in eds Ian Cooper, Ekkehard Knörer and Bernhard Malkmus, *Third Agents: Secret Protagonists of the Modern Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008, 201-213.

texts focalised on the person of the desiring woman, the mother/daughter pair is represented as imprisoned – in a garden, village or cell – and the mother is unable to escape this enclosure into *Jouissance*. At the end of the fiction, she dies and the daughter alone eventually leaves the closed space and is reinserted, often through a version of fostering by the abandoned husband (whether her father or not) into the genealogy of legitimacy.

Fatal Attraction and *The Piano* are both fictions in which the adulterous triangle is complemented by a maternal triangle. In the former this consists conventionally of the wife, her daughter and the female rival, in the latter of the wife, her daughter and the piano, which reproduces them both prosthetically in different ways. In examining the place of the dog in the two films, we can see how differently this figure can distend the prosthetic complexities of triangular desire.

The dog of the Gallagher family is very much part of their world. Ellen wants a rabbit – with ghastly consequences, as we know – but she already has a dog, Quincey. Before Dan's wife and daughter go away for a few fatal days, the completeness of this family of four is established in a few happy domestic scenes. But there is a down-side. The dog and the daughter in turn disrupt the possibility, after an elegant evening out, of marital sex: the dog must be taken out – “aren't you forgetting something?” asks the wife – and when Dan gets home from dog-walking the child is in their bed. Then the family decide to move out of the city and while Beth and Ellen are away house-hunting, leaving “Daddy with Quincey” so he won't be “all alone”, Dan commits adultery with sultry (and persistent) Alex.

Arriving home in the dark he apologises to the dog, picks up a phone message and takes a shower. The next morning he phones his unsuspecting wife and she tells him the spaghetti sauce is in the fridge. Then Alex phones and invites him over with the dog. They spend the afternoon in Central Park (with major references to fathers and *Madame Butterfly*),⁵¹ and instead of Beth's spaghetti sauce, Dan eats Alex's; they make love again, she cuts her wrists, and he finally gets home the next morning not long before the rest of his family are due back. Infidelity must be hidden, so he musses up the bedclothes and feeds the tell-tale pasta sauce to the dog – which it slurps doggily. Is it appetite or loyalty? This dog too knows who's master.

⁵¹ See Naomi Segal, ‘The fatal attraction of *Madame Butterfly*’, in *Opera, exoticism and visual culture*, eds Hyunseon Lee and Naomi Segal. Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Wien: Peter Lang, 2015, 223–42.



Quincey slurps the sauce

After this, the dog reappears only once. We are on to heavier fare: everyone knows what happens to the rabbit. Beth is back after her car-crash; Dan runs her a bath, brings her pain-killers, bolts all the doors. Then upstairs in the bathroom mirror, Alex appears with a knife, with which she is cutting herself. Beth covers; the bath overflows. Downstairs, Dan knows nothing – until the water starts dripping through from upstairs. And again the faithful dog slurps...

After the dog has alerted Dan to the danger overhead, Alex rises briefly from the bath in which he has tried to strangle her, to be shot by virtuous Beth, and the waters of domesticity can close over her.⁵² The closing shot of the film – after the original, *Madame Butterfly* ending was replaced – focuses on a photo of the smiling family, mother, father and child, restored and happy having successfully ejected the outsider.

⁵² As Mandy Merck notes, the only scene that does not seem to rouse and implicate her is the surely very noisy murder scene, in which she is obviously inessential: see Merck, 210–11.

In *The Piano*, the protagonist, who does not or cannot speak, is surrounded by prostheses that allow her to communicate without speech. Soon after the mother and daughter arrive in New Zealand, Ada has to leave her piano behind on the beach.



Ada's gaze

At first, her daughter Flora is her favoured medium for communicating with other people. The two wear identical bonnets, make identical gestures, form a perfect couple, all the more while Ada is parted from the piano. But bit by bit, as the sexual connexion develops between Ada and Baines, via the wordless medium of the piano (and later the body), Flora is shut out. We see her gradually transfer a loyalty to Stewart which will end in her betrayal of her mother to him. This begins with her exclusion from what has become the erotic space of Baines's hut. She is left outside, and all she can do is play with the dog Flynn in the veranda of the hut, while the rain pours down, dressing it up in her Red Riding Hood cloak, talking to it and babying it.

In the scene in which Baines and Ada first lie together, Flora peeps through a hole in the hut's wooden walls, seeing a presumably inexplicable glimpse of naked flesh; later, with the Maori children, she plays erotic games with tree-trunks which are punished by her stepfather. Baines returns the piano – and Ada no longer feels the same, when she plays it, without his gaze behind her. Rejecting her daughter, she goes to Baines... followed by Stewart, together with the dog. It is the husband now who half-hears and half-sees, exactly like the

child excluded from its parents' primal scene. Unlike Flora, we presume he understands what he glimpses through the hole in the wooden wall – and it is a naughty joke on the director's part that, as he gazes, the dog is slurping faithfully in his palm.

Here we see the dog not so much as a proxy moving the plot along – how differently it slurps from the dog in *Fatal Attraction* – but as an additional kind of prosthesis. Ada no longer needs either the child or the piano, for her body is speaking directly to her lover, releasing her from the “egg in motion” of her elective mutism.⁵³ What this dog does is provide a moment of humour for the audience which exactly maps on to a moment of agony for the betrayed husband.

What exactly do these two prosthetic dogs tell us? Both of them supply a layer of humour in fictions that are actually full of violence and desire, with very little levity. But the humour is not an element of relief. Instead it preempts and accompanies that violence and desire and, more specifically, it uses a mute non-human body to tell the tale of how two people's pleasure means a third person's betrayal and anguish.

And one last thing: on occasions, we must admit, these dogs exceed their functions both as proxies and as prostheses. What exactly can we see in this image, in which the gaze of the dog seems to echo both Ada's desire for the lost piano and a kind of knowledge that seemingly is only possible in a world without language.



Flynn's gaze

⁵³ See Segal, *Consensuality*, 212–217.

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