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L'Art et la Durabilité

ANIMAL SELF, HUMAN OTHER: READING AND TEACHING LIMINAL SPECIES IDENTITIES THROUGH FERAL DOG NARRATIVES

ABSTRACT:

WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL OF THE CONCEPT OF THE FERAL, AND OF LITERARY TEXTS ON FERAL DOGS, FOR THINKING ABOUT HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONS AND SPECIES IDENTITIES? IN THIS TALK, I EXPLORE HOW FERAL DOGS MAY HELP US DECONSTRUCT SPECIES CATEGORIES AND ARGUE THAT STORIES ABOUT FERAL DOGS IN PARTICULAR HAVE SIGNIFICANT POTENTIAL FOR LITERARY DISCUSSIONS ON SPECIES BOUNDARIES AND RELATIONS, NOT LEAST WHEN TEACHING UNIVERSITY LITERATURE COURSES. USING EVA HORNUNG'S NOVEL DOG BOY (2010) AS MY PRIME EXAMPLE AND DRAWING ON MY OWN TEACHING EXPERIENCE AS WELL AS ON A WIDE RANGE OF THEORIES, I PONDER THE PRODUCTIVE INSTABILITIES AND LIMINALITIES OF THE FERAL, OF FERAL DOGS SPECIFICALLY, AND OF DOGS MORE BROADLY IN A LITERARY CONTEXT. FRUSTRATING SPECIES AND NATURE/CULTURE BOUNDARIES, FERAL DOG NARRATIVES SUCH AS HORNUNG'S NOVEL POINT TO THE CONSTRUCTEDNESS OF SPECIES IDENTITIES. AS SUCH, THE NOVEL CAN BE USED TO OPEN UP BROADER DISCUSSIONS ON HUMAN ANIMALITY AND HUMAN/ANIMAL DISTINCTIONS AS QUESTIONS OF SELF AND OTHER IN THE CLASSROOM, WHILE ALSO PROVIDING ACCESS TO THE ISSUES THAT MORE TRADITIONAL DOG NARRATIVES MAY OPEN UP.

Biographical note:

Sune Borkfelt has lectured at Aarhus University, Denmark, since 2007. He is author of Reading Slaughter: Abattoir Fictions, Space, and Empathy in Late Modernity (Palgrave, 2022), as well as co-editor (with Matthias Stephan) of Literary Animal Studies and the Climate Crisis (Palgrave, 2022) and Interrogating Boundaries of the Nonhuman: Literature, Climate Change, and Environmental Crises (Lexington Books, 2022). His research on topics such as nonhuman otherness, the naming of nonhuman animals, postcolonial animals, and the ethics of animal product marketing, has appeared in a variety of journals and edited collections. He is also editor of a 2016 special issue of the journal Otherness: Essays and Studies focused on animal alterity.