

Reading Children and Animal-Human Relations in *Charlotte's Web* and *The One and Only Ivan*

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It is often assumed that children enjoy an animistic connection with animals, as the predominance of the talking animal story genre in children's literature attests. Ignorant, uncivilized, or vulnerable as these animal characters often are, they bespeak 'the animal-like condition of children' in adults' eyes (Nodelman and Reimer 2003, p. 194). Some animal stories have been read as encouraging child readers to identify with their animal characters, who mature as the plot advances.

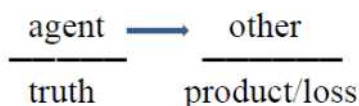
For instance, Karen Coats reads *Charlotte's Web* (1952) as 'a Lacanian poetics... in its allegorical representation of the development of subjectivity' (Coats 2004, p. 32). Both the girl Fern and the pig Wilbur become subjects through social interaction. Coats theorises that the child reader's engagement with the novel works in an identificatory mode: 'Whereas the young reader might not immediately make an interspecies identification with a small pig who wakes up in a barn, he or she is invited to identify with a small young girl' (p. 33). In other words, the child reader's identification with the pig is made possible by an identification with Fern, who 'inaugurates the identificatory relationship with the pig through the characterization of him as very small and weak' (p. 34). In the eyes of Amy Ratelle, Coats puts so much emphasis on 'the creation of human identity' that she takes Wilbur as 'a stand-in for the human child' (Ratelle 2014, p. 327). Ratelle asserts that E.B. White grants Wilbur a unique animal subjectivity through Charlotte's 'ingenious plan' 'aiming to make the human community complicit in the recognition of Wilbur as an individual' (p. 334). However, I contend that, if the distinctive image of Wilbur as an animal is endorsed by Charlotte's words

that encourage his human owner to recognize the pig's true worth, then Wilbur's so-called unique animal subjectivity is vitiated when 'a second individual pig' named 'Uncle' (Wilbur's rival for the blue ribbon at the fair), is depicted through the popular image of 'negative porcine stereotype of filth, stupidity and indolence' (p. 338). In other words, "human" is still intrinsic to the representations of both pigs, because the images are coloured by human's ideas of the species whether they are positive or not.

Patently, any analysis of animals in *Charlotte's Web* must take into consideration its animals' relations with humans. One curious feature in this regard concerns the manner in which boundaries are drawn between the two species. The animal characters in the novel speak as fluently to one another as do the humans among themselves. Yet no direct communication occurs between animals and people, a fact that serves to differentiate the two species. We are left with a number of crucial questions. For instance, if animals in children's books are stand-ins for children, what is the idea behind the girl-child Fern's intimacy with the child-animals? What kind of animal-human relation is suggested by this mode of co-existence?

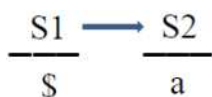
Like *Charlotte's Web*, Katherine Applegate's Newbery Medal Winner *The One and Only Ivan* (2012) shares a core element: 'animal rescue'. As Applegate's gorilla, Ivan, attempts to rescue the little elephant Ruby from her pathetic state by drawing pictures, so the spider Charlotte weaves words on her web in the hope of saving the little pig Wilbur from imminent death. Like Fern in *Charlotte's Web*, the human girl Julia in *The One and Only Ivan* does not have direct verbal communication with the animals. There is, however, a major difference between the two works: the authors of both novels employ different types of narrative voice combined with the viewpoints of characters through focalisations to represent animal-human relationships. Wilbur's tale is told in the third person, while Ivan the gorilla tells a story in a first-person voice. In this first-person narrative, the reader is invited to align with Ivan. Julia plays a minor role, with the only access to her thinking hinted by Ivan's narration. Hence, it is worth investigating the function of the girl children in the novels with regard to the animal-human relations when the novels are studied together in the context of children-as-animal convention.

To pursue the understanding of the function of the girl children I draw on Lacan's theory of the four discourses. The four discourses share a single structure incorporating the four positions shown schematically below:

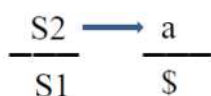


Someone in the 'agent' position utters a discourse to address the 'other'. 'Truth' is subsumed under the 'agent' position, from which it is separated by a bar to indicate the inaccessibility of the agent. Beneath the 'other' position is the barred 'product/loss,' the result of the discourse. Lacan uses four symbols (S1, S2, \$, a) to represent, respectively, the four concepts. They are (1) the master signifier, which seeks to control all other signifiers; (2) knowledge that occurs when the master signifier represents something; (3) the divided subject; and (4) the objet petit a, or the cause of desire (Lacan 2007, p. 13~15). The four symbols are placed as shown in the first diagram below to form the 'master's discourse'. The four symbols rotate in a counter-clockwise direction around the four positions, resulting in the production of three other discourses: the 'university discourse', the 'analyst's discourse' and the 'hysteric's discourse', as shown in the diagrams below.

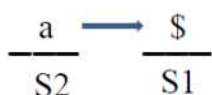
The master's discourse:



The university discourse:



The analyst's discourse:



The hysteric's discourse:



The four discourses represent ‘four different kinds of operation of language, each of which constitutes and structures both the subject and social reality differently [and] structurally as far as identity and interpersonal or social power relations are concerned’ (Olivier 2008, p. 181). The university discourse refers to the propagation of knowledge via the educational system. The master’s discourse exemplifies the tyrannical dissemination of a dominant ideology. The hysteric’s discourse highlights the existence of an alienated subject suppressed by the first two kinds of discourses. In the analyst’s discourse, the subject is able to encounter ideological apparatuses. As Mark Bracher explains, ‘[Lacan’s] schemata of the four discourses offer the means, respectively, of the understanding four key social phenomena: educating, governing, protesting, and revolutionizing’ (Bracher 1994, p. 107).

The theory of the four discourses is germane to my investigation because the characters in the two novels and their actions fit neatly into Lacan’s formulation. The identificatory narrative force of *Charlotte’s Web* on the child reader, which Coats elaborates, can be read initially as the university discourse. As such, the reader in the ‘other’ position is addressed by the book in the ‘agent’ position, which consequently produces the reader as the alienated subject in the ‘product/loss’ position through its fictional portrayal of the reader as animals. This reader as the alienated subject then is repressed in the ‘truth’ position. Moreover, Fern and the adults in *Charlotte’s Web* engage in the master’s discourse. That is, the adults who plan to kill Wilbur are in the ‘agent’ position, where they exercise power over Fern, who is in the ‘other’ position. In her negotiation with adults, Fern asserts her subjectivity, which is repressed by the adult’s master’s discourse. Her tactics, which hinge on her relation with the animals of the story, will be closely read in relation to Lacan’s four discourses in the main body of this essay. Fern’s relation with the animals exhibits a certain mode of animal-human relation entangled with the child-adult relation; this is implied in the adult’s portrayal of childlike animals. Likewise, as we shall see below, *The One and Only Ivan* also operates along the discourses formulated by Lacan.

In both of the novels, however indirect the communication between the human girls and the rescued animals may be, identification plays a key role in both rescue processes. Coats has looked at how Fern’s identification initiates the rescue mission of Wilbur and paves the way to her subject formation. Similarly, Ruby the little elephant cannot be saved without the

identification formed between Ivan and the girl Julia. Salvation results in the re-formation of Ivan's mind into a subject. Thus, I shall begin with a discussion of identification as the foundation for animal-human communication in the novels.

Identification as the Commencement of Rescue

Coats considers Fern's identification with Wilbur as the starting point of the book's rescue mission. Wilbur is 'a symbol with whom [Fern] narcissistically identifies' due to the shared 'characteristics of smallness and dependency' (Coats 2004, p. 18). Coats argues that due to this identification, Fern's gesture towards the pig represents the girl's imaginary relation with her mother, because 'together they form an Imaginary dyad, with Fern (presumably) replicating her own mother's desire when she herself was a narcissistic object for her mother' (p. 18-19). Fern's self is endangered when a paternal authority overrides her ownership of Wilbur. Consequently, the girl develops a symptom in the form of Charlotte's story in a continuous 'attempt to save herself' (p. 23). In the guise of Charlotte, Fern continues to play a maternal role with Wilbur. Fern's intention of maintaining the self can be located in Charlotte's confession to Wilbur: 'by helping you, perhaps I was trying to lift up my life a trifle' (White 1952, p. 157).

The characters in *The One and Only Ivan* identify with each other in a different way than do the characters in *Charlotte's Web*. The identification shows up between Ivan and Julia when Ivan expresses his view that he and Julia share an artistic talent; this is echoed by Julia when she deciphers Ivan's drawing for Ruby. At first glance, however, Ivan's incentive to rescue Ruby does not seem to be rooted in identification. Ivan is motivated by a sense of responsibility related to his promise to Stella, his elephant friend who dies of a negligence-induced leg infection. Ruby identifies with Stella as a mother substitute in the face of patriarchal suppression. The former is so stricken by her fearful identification with the dead Stella that she asks Ivan whether she will end up like her someday (Applegate 2012, p. 165). Ivan contemplates such a disgraceful future for Ruby, and decides: 'I can't let Ruby be another One and Only' (206). Ivan's concern for Stella and Ruby results in his being emotionally influenced by them; that is, they 'communicate need states – both to oneself....to others who care about one's welfare and about whose welfare one cares' (Clark and Brisette

2000, p. 213). The animals' shame concerning their living conditions binds them together. With respect to this, Ana-Maria Rizzuto notes, 'the shame experience has a direct connection to actual and internalized object relations and, therefore, to the superego and the ego-ideal as they relate to the sense of self in the presence of the maternal eye and, later, to other people' (Rizzuto 2008, p. 54). In other words, Ivan is jolted into action by his identification with Ruby's desire and his own need for improvement. Likewise, Julia's final stroke of aid is enacted by her sympathetic identification with the animals' situation.

In *The One and Only Ivan* the rescue mission has a mutually beneficial effect. Not only are Ruby and Ivan relocated to a well-managed zoo, but the latter is able to change his state of mind and become a subject. Prior to Ruby's arrival, the penned Ivan is encompassed by self-deception, lacking both memories of the past and hopes for the future. The little elephant's childish questions stir the gorilla's passivity: 'A memory flashes past, surprising me. I think of my father, snoring peacefully under the sun while I try every trick I know to wake him' (p. 87). Having told his tale to Ruby, Ivan affirms: 'my mind is still racing. For perhaps the first time ever, I've been remembering' (p. 144). This renewed spirit and proactivity make their mark on his painting: 'I am not painting what I see in front of me. A banana. An apple. I'm painting what I see in my head. Things that don't exist.' (p. 188) Like Fern in Coat's reading, Ivan emerges as a subject.

While Ivan's narrative follows his knowledge of language, he does not actually *speak* to humans. The narrative is the verbalisation of his thought process that records the emergence of his subject formation, which has 'human' and 'animal' as its compositional components. Coats implies that the speech of both Charlotte and Wilbur is the symptomatic expression of Fern's subject formation. In Lacanian terms, subject emerges from the endless representation of one signifier by another (Lacan 2006, p. 708). In this regard, we can say that Charlotte and Wilbur are 'signifiers' to Fern's subject formation. The same holds true concerning the contribution Ruby and Stella make to Ivan's subject formation. Hence, it seems that subject formation that is affected by the interrelation between characters is where we may consider best the interactive mode between 'human' and 'animal.' Therefore, the principal characters in each novel can be read in Lacan's formulation of the four discourses, from which comes 'the emergence of what we call the subject – via the signifier which, as it happens, here

functions as representing this subject with respect to another signifier' (Lacan 2007, p. 13). In the next section, basing my discussion on the protagonists' interrelations, I will consider the main characters of each novel in terms of the symbols Lacan designates to occupy the four places of his four discourses. This will enable us to see the animal-human relationship in the novels.

The University Discourse and the Hysteric's Discourse in *Charlotte's Web*

The relation between the main characters in *Charlotte's Web* can be read in terms of Lacan's university discourse and hysteric's discourse. Charlotte occupies the 'agent' position of the university discourse as she holds knowledge (S2) because of her control over how humans will perceive Wilbur. Accordingly, the master signifier, or S1, which refers to what Wilbur might be, is repressed into the 'truth' position under the 'agent.' Other humans can be seen to take this 'truth' position by dint of their inability to understand Charlotte as the source of the miraculous messages. Wilbur then becomes the object petit a in the 'other' position, who Charlotte addresses through her woven words.

In her psychoanalytic reading of *Charlotte's Web*, Coats argues that Charlotte's story is Fern's symptom (p. 22) and that Fern 'unaccountably... "hears" the voices of all the barnyard animals as they go about their business' (p. 23). Coats, in other words, holds the animals' speech to be the product of Fern's imagination. Out of the psychoanalytic context, Coats's point would seem unfounded, as *Charlotte's Web* is told in a third-person narrative in which the animals and Fern speak and act of their own accord, leaving no space for Fern's imaginings. However, the insight seems more on target when we consider Gérard Genette's narrative typology.

In Genette's terms, 'heterodiegetic' narrative refers to one 'with the narrator absent from the story he [sic] tells' (Genette 1980, p. 244), while a 'homodiegetic' narrative is one 'with the narrator present as a character in the story he [sic] tells' (p. 245). The third-person narrative in *Charlotte's Web* is clearly an example of the former. However, the narrative may be 'homodiegetic' as well, wherein Fern retrospectively tells a story in which she is one

character among animals. That a mature Fern is in fact the narrator of *Charlotte's Web* has been implied by John Griffith: 'Much of *Charlotte's Web* is told, not from Fern's point of view, but from a "Fern-like" point of view, a patient, attentive, receptive, unjudgemental appreciation of little things' (Griffith 1993, p. 31). This view resonates with Lucien Agost's observation that by the end of the novel, 'Wilbur clearly manifests an adult perspective, having experienced the 'growth and transition...attributed only to Fern in the work' (Agost 1995, p. 119).

Fern's return to her past follows the transference she has done on her old self. In Lacan's view, transference is the process by which the analyst initiates the search for the patient's unconscious desire by allowing the patient to repeat past interpersonal history. Transference is, in a sense, the patient's internal relation to him or herself (Lacan 1988, p. 235). In our story, Fern plays out her 'desire relation' to mother by protecting Wilbur. As a mature narrator, she replays this relation by speaking in Charlotte's maternal voice. If this prospect of Fern as the narrator has resisted symbolisation, then that is one effect of the university discourse in which Charlotte takes the 'agent' position and Fern is the emergent subject occupying the repressed 'product/loss' position. As Bruce Fink explains, in the university discourse the agent 'is the knowing subject' who simultaneously produces and excludes the 'subject of the unconscious' in the position of product/loss (Fink 1998, p. 33).

The notion that Fern is the narrator speaking in the voices of animals is also manifested in the 'hysteric's discourse', which in Lacan's scheme is the inverse of the university discourse. In the hysteric's discourse, Fern is the divided and alienated subject taking the 'agent' position. Just as she is instructed to remain outside Wilbur's barred pen, so too is she, the subject, barred from Wilbur, the objet petit a who occupies the 'truth' position in the hysteric's discourse. As Fink explains: 'In the hysteric's discourse, object (a) appears in the position of truth. That means that the truth of the hysteric's discourse, its hidden motor force, is the real' (Fink 1998, p. 37). This echoes Coats's reading that Wilbur cannot help but go 'into the register of the Real' and exist in 'Fern's unconscious' (p. 22). The master signifier in the 'other' position, which receives the address from the subject of the 'agent' position, refers to other humans, including Fern's parents and Dr Dorian, who lack certain knowledge (e.g., that animals have the power of speech). Fink notes, 'the hysteric pushes the master – incarnated in

a partner, teacher, or whomever to the point where he or she can find the master's knowledge lacking. Hysterics, like good scientists, do not set out to desperately explain everything with the knowledge they already have' (Fink 1998, p. 36). So, Charlotte, whose voice is provided by Fern, is the knowledge (S2) assuming the 'product/loss' position, because the knowledge of Charlotte is the very product of Fern the subject, and thus beyond human understanding.

The Master's Discourse and the Analyst's Discourse in *The One and Only Ivan*

In *The One and Only Ivan*, Ivan is emotionally tranquilized by his imprisonment. The humans who function as his masters are responsible for this state of affairs. Therefore, humans and their language, which Ivan uses to make sense of the world, preside over the master's discourse as the 'agent' in 'the dominating or commanding position... [that] is filled by S1..., the master signifier' (Fink 1995, p131). In this discursive context, Ivan or some other animals is situated in the 'other' position, holding the knowledge, or S2, which the human master gives them to learn about themselves in an alienated way. In his enslavement as the animal 'other,' Ivan is required to produce drawings for Mack to sell. Ivan says that Mack simply 'walks away with' the painting he does for Ruby (p. 183). Ivan's paintings become the surplus value, or the objet petit a, in the 'product/loss' position. This is inaccessible to Ivan, who is in the position of the 'other'. In Lacan's terms, 'the master is satisfied with...this surplus jouissance, such that, after all, there is no indication that in himself the slave was unhappy to be giving it' (Lacan 2007, p. 79). Fink explains Lacan's view of the relation between S1 and S2 in the master's discourse this way: 'the master is unconcerned with knowledge: as long as everything works, as long as his or her power is maintained or grows, all is well' (Fink 1995, p. 131). Indeed profit alone drives Mack, whose neglectful treatment of his animals leads to Stella's death. This is one effect of the master signifier (human), which presents itself as 'a dead end, a stopping point, a term, word, or phrase' that petrifies Ivan's association and even causes 'the death of a loved one' (Fink 1998, p. 38). Meanwhile, everything 'concerning the truth of the master [humans],' which is the split subject (\$), must be hidden in the 'truth' position of the master's discourse, 'insofar as it is split off and nobody understands a thing about it' (Lacan 2007, p. 90).

Ruby's story of being trapped in a water hole elucidates the flip side of the 'truth' about humans being helpful to animals. In fact, the little elephant's actions generally turn the master's discourse into the analyst's discourse. Ivan reports that Ruby 'makes a happy, lilting sound, an elephant laugh' which reminds him of 'the song of a bird' that woke him 'every morning' when he was still curled safely in mother's nest' (p. 94). Here Ruby's stimulation of Ivan's desires for entering the analyst's discourse corresponds to Lacan's statement that, 'the analyst makes himself [sic] the causes of the analysand's desire' (Lacan 2007, p. 38). From the moment of Stella's death and Ruby's request for stories, the latter becomes the object *petit a* in the 'agent' position, and Ivan the subject (\$) takes the 'other' or analysand position in the analyst's discourse. Consequently, Ivan, whose mind was once a 'dead end,' begins to mobilize, his past memories returning to him in a rush. All at once, he is able to picture something yet to exist. Ruby's transference kick-starts this entire process. Fink explains the effect of transference in the analyst's discourse:

Transference, viewed as the transfer of affect (evoked in the past by people and events) into the here and now of the analytic setting, means that the analysand must be able to project onto the analyst a whole series of emotions felt in relation to significant figures from his or her past and present (Fink 1998, p. 42).

Ivan's and Ruby's memories can be considered S2 in the 'truth' position. As S2, their memories are the 'unconscious knowledge, that knowledge which is caught up in the signifying chain and has yet to be subjectified' (Fink 1998, p. 38). By sharing her 'good humans' story and captivity trauma, Ruby not only jumpstarts Ivan's memories, but also liberates other meanings for which 'human,' the master signifier in the 'product/loss' position stands. Fink informs us that, 'the task of analysis is to bring such master signifiers into relation with other signifiers, that is, to dialectize the master signifiers it produces' (Fink, 1998, p. 38). From such process, Ivan emerges as a resourceful subject, capable of rescue.

Girls and their 'Talking' Animals

The aforementioned psychoanalytic discourses can be read to reveal a difference between our two works in terms of 'human' and 'animal' relations. As the university and the hysteric's discourses in *Charlotte's Web* indicate, the girl-child is the force behind each and every event. Fern attempts to convey to others what she recognizes in Wilbur. When Charlotte weaves her view of Wilbur on her web, Wilbur protests: 'But I'm not terrific, Charlotte. I'm just about average for a pig.' Charlotte replies, 'You're terrific as far as *I'm* concerned...and that's what counts' (p. 91, original emphasis). Charlotte and Fern share a perception of Wilbur. Early on, the narrator (now we know it is Fern) uses internal focalisation to describe Wilbur's 'distinctive' thinking/personality, and external focalisation to portray his 'special' appearance.

The internal focalisation diminishes as the plot advances, until the point at which Charlotte makes her appearance. Fern the narrator refrains from internally focalising on Wilbur, implying that Wilbur is under Charlotte's observation. Correspondingly, Fern's maternal role is assumed by the spider, who cannot enter Wilbur's mind but only watch him. Only when Charlotte is dying is there a gradual increase in the use of internal focalisation on the pig. Although Wilbur is the watched object, Fern equally *reveals herself* through her focalisation on Wilbur. This indicates her relation with him. Here we see in action the Lacanian gaze: 'I see only from one point, but in my existence I am looked at from all sides' (Lacan 1988, p. 72); 'in our relation to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in the figures of representation,... that is what we call the gaze' (p. 73).

Fern is forced to save her animal by speaking in Charlotte's voice. The girl must resort to 'natural power' to fence her value and cover the 'child' identity in the operation. This strategy works because the adults involved deny or ignore the spider as the source of the woven words, just as Fern is left unacknowledged as the narrator and behind-the-scenes director. Fern is acting as an author who 'writes' her talking animal story, in precise parallel to E. B. White, who himself wrote the novel in which animals talk. Fern makes up the animal talk, the very conventional gesture that signifies children's close association with animals. In this sense, Fern speaks, as a child, in the voice of animals. At the same time, however, she

speaks in the voice of an adult with whom the child reader is encouraged to identify for the purpose of self-development.

Like Fern, Julia of *The One and Only Ivan* aligns herself with the animals that need rescuing. However, Julia's mental affinity with her animals is only intimated. As the homodiegetic narrator, Ivan can offer an external focalisation of Julia only, thus providing, at best, hints to her thinking. Our protagonist involuntarily observes Julia's behaviours, suggesting a kind of cognitive resonance between them. In a scene that has Ivan worried about Stella's worsening leg infection, the gorilla notes, 'Julia follows my gaze. 'Where is Stella, anyway?' she asks, and she goes to Stella's gaze' (p. 108). Ruby's endless performance training worries both Ivan and Julia. Ivan observes: 'We are watching Julia do her homework. She does not seem to be enjoying it. I can tell because she is sighing more than usual' (p. 194).

Afterwards Julia and her father post Ivan's painting on the billboard. The painting draws public attention to how the caged animals really live. During the journalists' visit, the camera man and route of inspection neatly follow the tracks of Ivan's concern. Ivan watches closely, saying, 'When his eyes fall on the claw-stick, he stops. He trains his camera on the gleaming blade. Then he moves on' (p. 229). The camera gaze corresponds to Ivan's subjective concern. The signs of protesting people confirm Julia's concern, which is observed by Ivan, as he comments, 'Julia likes the sign, which says 'Elephants Are People Too' (p. 233).

While Julia's interiority is not as accessible to the reader as Fern's inner world, the telepathy between Julia and Ivan bears witness to a shared 'animality.' In their case, this animality embodies a mode of animal-human relationship, which differs from the one that Ivan maintains with other humans at the time when he lives with them and learns their language. In reality, apes can be language-trained. It comes as no surprise, then, that Ivan does talk, having been raised in Mack's house. Nevertheless, he has trouble grasping humans: 'I've learned to understand human words over the years, but understanding human speech is not the same as understanding humans' (p. 3).

As he grows and his physiological functions make it unsuitable for him to live with humans, he is penned and exhibited. However, the zoo does not provide proper care, and he develops problems that signal distress. Ivan's poor mental state makes it impossible for him to anticipate the future. His indeterminate identity (gorilla or human?) is demonstrated in his monologues. This ambiguity of identity is symptomatic of his self-alienation, the result of his primordial animality being partially repressed by human domination in the form of the Symbolic Order.

Ivan's animality does not assert its best effect until he meets Ruby. The little elephant represents the ape's desire, and paves the way for his subject formation. Ivan senses something missing in his life, glimpsed in what he perceives in Ruby: 'Ruby stirs. Her trunk moves, as if she is reading for something that isn't there' (p. 112). The little elephant stirs in Ivan's mind memories of his wildlife childhood and also of the humans who deprived him of it. For Lacan 'the interest the subject takes in his own split is bound up with that which determines it — namely, a privileged object, which has emerged from some primal separation, from some self-mutilation induced by the very approach of the real, whose name...is the *objet a*' (Lacan 1988, p. 83). The 'privileged object' is Ruby, with whom Ivan now associates his childhood, and 'the real' is signified and metaphorised by humans, whose capacity for doing both good and bad to animals Ivan heretofore has refused to acknowledge.

Ivan's subjectivity is inscribed with the residual marks of 'bad' and 'good' people. His view of such persons forms the foundation for his rescue mission. The gorilla observes that the previous billboard advertising reflects the assumptions made by 'bad' humans about animals. 'Good' humans are the target audience for Ivan's own painting and the word 'home.' His 'good' human counterpart is Julia, daughter of George the mall cleaner. After Julia correctly decodes Ivan's painting for Ruby, she needs to get her father's help to post Ivan's painting on the billboard. Because a patriarchal/adult system undergirds the father's refusal of her request, Julia uses a different strategy to persuade the father from the one Fern used. To elicit the father's sympathy, Julia mentions the claw-stick, the phallic object, to the father, who 'runs a finger along the blade' (p. 219). Moreover, she evokes Stella by asking: 'what if Ruby ends up like Stella?' (p. 219). All along, Julia's confusion of the word 'principal' with the word 'principle' (p. 195) implies that she lingers on the threshold of the Symbolic Order. In

this crucial persuasion scene, while Julia continues to fail to spell ‘principle’ correctly, her attempt to communicate through language indicates her self-initiated passage into the Symbolic Order.

In her Lacanian reading of *Charlotte’s Web*, Coats reads Fern stepping into the Symbolic Order when Fern is rescuing Wilbur. My reading of *Charlotte’s Web* has also revealed that when Fern speaks in the voice of Charlotte, she is the split subject in the ‘agent’ position in the hysteric’s discourse, a sure sign of her entrance to the Symbolic Order. Here Julia, like Fern, challenges adult domination by the very means available in the Symbolic Order. In Lacanian terms, Julia is operating in the hysteric’s discourse, where she is becoming a split subject in the ‘agent’ position, just as Fern is addressing the ‘human’ in the ‘other’ position. Julia and Fern take the ‘agent’ position in the hysteric’s discourse, which is indicative of subject formation in language. As Bracher notes:

The divided subject, \$, is thus a manifestation of the alienation that occurs as a result of the subject’s accession to language—an alienation that is suppressed in the discourses of the Master and of the University, but which gains expression and dominance in the discourse of the Hysteric. (Bracher 1994, p. 122)

Julia plays a supporting role in the rescue mission, and her existence implies not only Ivan’s human-suppressed ‘animality’ but also his developing mental problems. Conversely, Ivan’s existence suggests that animality is integral to Julia’s mental state. Like ‘hysterical’ Julia, who challenges the human-adult domination, the nearly hysterical Ivan must be in the ‘other’ position of the analyst’s discourse in order for Ruby as the ‘agent’ to revive his suppressed childhood memories and animality.

Conclusion

In children’s literature, animal characters often have childlike features. These talking animals serve as fictional counterparts with whom the child reader can identify. Featuring children

and talking animals performing together, *Charlotte's Web* presents a different human-animal relation from that of *The One and Only Ivan*. The divergent human-animal relations in the novels suggest that the authors express their ideas of children-as-animals differently. The differences rest on whether the narrating subjects are humans or animals, on their narrating stances, and on the power relation with the persons who function as obstacles in their respective rescue goals.

In *The One and Only Ivan*, the narrating subject is Ivan, a speaking gorilla, who faces powerful humans en route to rescuing Ruby. He uses pictures as his appeal for help from Julia. Playing a supporting role in Ivan's battle against humans, Julia embodies the adult author's idea of animal-like children, because her animality is conveyed by her mental association with Ivan.

In contrast to Julia, Fern of *Charlotte's Web*, who also represents an adult's notion of animal-like children, functions differently. Fern's animality is implied by her understanding of animals and her identification with them. Throughout the story, she seems to an outsider who observes Charlotte's mission. Yet, she is a homodiegetic narrator in disguise who makes up the animals' talking as 'authentically' as possible. Fern's act is modelled on the adult author's gesture to tell animal stories and hence constitutes another effort to write children as animals. In their own ways, both novels employ talking animals and their relation with human child characters to express the idea of children-as-animals.

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