

ANIMAL PLANET: PHYLLIS GOTLIEB'S BESTIARY

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Phyllis Gotlieb occupies an odd in between space in Canadian Literature. Her primary output has been Science Fiction, but SF of such density and complexity that “Regular readers of science fiction are somewhat resistant” to her work (Columbo 37). She is also well-regarded as a poet, having been short-listed for a Governor General’s Award for *Ordinary, Moving* in 1969, but Gotlieb herself believes her SF output has impacted negatively on her reputation as a poet: “there was always in my audience a bit of reluctance to take my work seriously because I wrote science fiction, which has never been greatly respected as a form of art in Canada even to this day” (Gotlieb, “Blue Apes”). As she notes in another interview, “the fact that I wrote SF put people off, because it’s not Canadian. People would ask me, ‘What do you think about landscape, as a Canadian writer?’ I said, ‘I don’t think about landscape.’ I didn’t quite get the same respect that, say Margaret Atwood did” (“Interview”). She is, in a way, neither fish nor fowl. The animal metaphor is appropriate, given how Gotlieb makes use of animals, and especially of the blurring of distinctions between them, in significant ways in both her poetry and her fiction. Indeed, for Gotlieb SF is a worthwhile literary pursuit because “people need to spread their imagination with visions, chimeras, speculations” (“Interview”). Note the association of SF’s value with the invocation of imaginary animals, in her reference to a chimera. Gotlieb’s characters frequently bridge the “human”/“animal” gap in arresting and insightful ways. The most productive use of animals in her work interrogates the concept of the human by juxtaposing it with variations and iterations on animality in ways that require her readers to break down the conventional binary opposition between the two. Gotlieb’s SF—and even her poetry—is heavily populated by various

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“animals” (human and otherwise) engaged in a complex symbiotic relationship, though even the most important critic of Canadian SF, David Ketterer, allows anthropocentrism to override this fact when he presents a human, Duncan Kinnear, rather than the telepathic cats (known as Ungrukh) as the hero of the Ungrukh trilogy (see Ketterer 70). A complex and encompassing view of the “human” (or sentient) as extending well beyond the parameters of human flesh is central to Gotlieb’s work, from her first novel (in which animal imagery is used relatively conventionally to depict those who fail as human) to her mature work, in which the concept of the human is almost entirely superseded in a universe in which even being sure what *is* an animal is problematic. Via the tropes of SF, Gotlieb literalizes the moral and ethical problems inherent in being a thinking animal.

“Animals are ideas as well as living, breathing creatures,” as Ralph H. Lutts observes, and “people and cultures have given them special meanings and responded to them in terms of those meanings” (2). Explicit in this observation is that what animals mean is determined by humans, not inherent in animals themselves. Divine, terrifying, important, trivial, animals are what people say they are; the relationship, as Randy Malamud points out, is hierarchical: “The predominant Western moral code positions humans with regard to animals as unilaterally supremacist” (3). While animals may function in art and literature to reveal things about ourselves, they do so on our own terms, not theirs. However, as Marian Scholtmeijer points out, “Anthropomorphism received a severe blow with the advent of the theory of evolution” (6): as we have come better to understand our origins through scientific investigation, we have discovered continuities as well as disjunctions between human and nonhuman animals and have been faced with the challenge of coming to terms with our literal animal heritage.

If science has modified our understanding of our relationships with animals, Science Fiction, or SF, the literature of science, has explored speculatively some of the ramifications of our modified understanding, and Gotlieb is hardly unique in her interest in non-human life. There is a strong historical association in SF between the alien and the animal. From H.G. Wells’s *Martians* on, aliens have frequently been presented as chimerical combinations of various Earth creatures, and the less humanoid they are, the less good they are.¹ Despite its interest in the alien, however, there is a strong

1. Indeed, Wells explicitly invokes evolution as a motif in the novel, imagining his *Martians* as creatures that have evolved from creatures very like humans into horrifying monsters. On the one hand, they are imaged as creatures almost of pure

anthropocentric streak in SF, so the alien, animalistic, and monstrous commonly coincide. Indeed, one can almost find an equation—alien=animal=monster—in much SF, especially in SF written prior to the nineteen-seventies. As Gary K. Wolfe has noted,

still today the icon of the beast [in SF] suggests the flow of unreason that underlies all rational structures. [. . .] In a genre in which the humanness of man is often overshadowed by wonders of technology and vast historical patterns, the beast stands as an inescapable and extreme reminder of our own animality, of what we may have been and what we may yet become. (86)

Though her career began in the late nineteen-fifties, however, Gotlieb never really embraced such a simple conception of the alien, animalistic, or monstrous. Indeed, her most “monstrous” characters are also often her most human ones, while her animals/aliens are often her most complex and civilized ones.

A particularly good example of Gotlieb’s mature practice can be found in one of her best-known poems, “Was/Man,” which is about a werewolf. One might argue that, strictly speaking, the werewolf is not a creature of SF, but Gotlieb includes the poem in *Son of the Morning*, one of her collections of SF short stories, so she invites readers to see the poem as of a piece with her SF work. This poem literally inverts the werewolf myth, in part through some linguistic play, to re-present this familiar hybrid creature of horror not as a man who must become a wolf when the moon is full but rather as a wolf which must become a man when the moon disappears. Even the title plays upon and blurs the distinction between man and animal. On one level, the title “Was/Man” plays on noun and verb forms: was/were man/wolf. The title compresses the relationship: the werewolf was man. However, it does more. Though the etymology of the word “werewolf” is doubtful, the usual speculation is that “werewolf” combines the Anglo-Saxon “wer,” or “man,” with “wolf.”² A werewolf is therefore literally a man-

mind, “minds that are to our minds as ours are to those of the beasts that perish, intelligences vast and cool and unsympathetic” (ch. 1), but on the other they are given physical traits such as tentacles and dietary habits such as the consumption of blood that associate them not merely with the animal but with the horrifying and monstrous. However, Wells also explicitly problematizes a simple equation of the Martians with the alien other by suggesting that they evolved from creatures similar to humans and by repeatedly comparing their depredations to European colonialism and to how humans treat animals generally. This comparison is implicit even in the above passage, which identifies human minds, in comparison to Martian ones, as akin to those of animal ones in comparison to human ones.

² The OED reports this proposed etymology and expresses doubt about it based on the variant spellings of the word in the oldest texts. However, the OED offers no alternative etymological proposal, so the possible link to “wer” cannot be discounted

wolf, as the alternative term for werewolf, wolfman, suggests. As the expression “fuzzy wuzzy” suggests (the nursery rhyme “Fuzzy Wuzzy was a bear” is a good example; Gotlieb’s verse is strongly influenced by nursery rhymes), Gotlieb may also be punning on the homonymic association between “was” and “wuz”: “was/man” is “wuzman” is furry man, or wolfman. Even the poem’s title, therefore, compresses much into its designation of the poem’s character, a character who inverts and subverts the conventional associations of the werewolf or wolfman.

Conventionally in stories of such a creature, the aberrant and therefore abhorrent creature is the werewolf, but here, the human rather than the animal is presented as strange, alien, lacking. The conversion from wolf to man is presented in predominantly negative terms. Though “at first he found all that / grown flesh of his luxurious, new senses nipping him / every minute,” becoming a man is predominantly a process of loss; “he lost quite a lot of hair, his fangs pulled in about half an inch,” and he loses his claws and tail. What he grows instead is bulk and a “crazy complex inefficient / nose.” Human flesh becomes a prison: “he wanted to gnaw on himself, drag off the excrescence / caught himself thinking of barred places, jail, cage, zoo / got scared he’d be trapped in this strange meat, man till he died.” A trapped animal can gnaw off a paw, but if the trap is the body itself, how does one gnaw oneself free? Becoming a man is not a release from negative bestiality to a positive, civilized, human world, as we might imagine, but rather an entrapment. If turning into an animal is something horrible, as it is consistently portrayed in werewolf stories, then surely turning back to a human would be good. Not from the wolf’s perspective, Gotlieb suggests. When he becomes wolf again, he “dashed water in his thickening fur to douse the rank / civil insidious urge of the secret man.” Gotlieb puns on the meanings of rank as status and bad smell; human rank is rank. Being human stinks. The ritual of purification here involves the washing away of the human, the “civil insidious urge” that can be contrasted with the animal nature humans tend to think they need to suppress. Indeed, imaging civility as insidious and an urge undercuts its common associations. Civil behaviour is public and valorized, not secretive and dangerous—not insidious—we think. And urges are what civil behaviour normally suppresses or conceals. The wolf, however, must conceal the urge to civility, an insidious desire hidden within him, as the human must

(and indeed seems to me to be on the whole more likely than not). In any event, regardless of the word’s etymology, the range of associations allowed by assuming a link to the Anglo-Saxon “wer” adds irresistible depth and texture to the poem.

conceal the insidious urge to bestiality. The poem, however, valorizes the animal urge rather than the human one by allying its perspective with that of the wolf rather than with that of the human.

In her earlier work, Gotlieb does invoke the conventional notion of the animal in the human as a negative, though even there she problematizes the equation of the animal and the monstrous. Gotlieb's first novel, *Sunburst*, tells the story of Sorrel Park, a small community scarred by the sunburst of a nuclear mishap that has led to mutations in children. Most of these children acquire superhuman abilities such as powers of telekinesis, telepathy, and teleportation, and they run riot, ending up caged by the army in a facility known as the Dump, which dampens their extrasensory powers, thereby containing them, if not really controlling them. Shandy Johnson, the protagonist, is a different breed of mutant, but the product of the same nuclear accident, and the novel deals with her growing understanding of what the Dumplings (as these confined children are dubbed) are, and what she herself is. Such stories form a subgenre of SF, but Gotlieb's version is unconventional in many ways. Only one such way is important for this discussion, however: how Gotlieb invokes the idea of the animal in the context of the story.

The cover copy of the first edition of the novel sells it as a conventional story of "a new race of monster," and there are elements of the novel that capitalize on the conventional association of the mutant with the monster, in ways that invoke animal metaphors. Jason Hemmer, for instance, is the first superpowered character we meet, and he looks to Shandy like an escapee from the Dump:

He had a boxcar-crouching bullethead set on a bull neck, thick arms, and a barrel chest tapering into short legs and small feet. But he was so obviously an extreme of his type she began to wonder if he hadn't escaped from a zoo. He had a longlipped chimp mouth, and best of all, one fantastic black eyebrow curling around his eyes and across the bridge of his nose. (5)

The predominant impression created by this passage is that Jason is or resembles some sort of a simian, and indeed the novel's thesis is that the psionic powers possessed by the mutant children represent a kind of genetic throwback to humanity's animal ancestry. The Dumplings are described by Shandy as like animals, and animalism in these terms is fairly clearly negative, since the Dumplings are also generally destructive and criminal. The conventional human/animal hierarchy is invoked, with humans represented as more developed than animals and jettisoning things that as humans—logical, rational creatures—they no longer need from their animal roots. Shandy suggests that "For herd animals that have to stick together [telepathy]

might be useful, but I bet a human being born with it could never separate his mind from everybody else's long enough to develop a logical idea" (151). So far, animalism is associated with the primitive and irrational and therefore with the monstrous and dangerous in the novel.

However, the first example I cited, Jason Hemmer, is an exception. He may seem physically simian—an atavistic throwback—but he is as human and sympathetic a character as is Shandy herself. Nor should we forget that Shandy herself is also a mutant, and in some ways even stranger and more alien than Jason and the other psis. Like Jason, she is also imaged in estranging terms when she is first described:

She was [. . .] a very tall cranelike girl, rather sallow, with narrow torso in a navy sweatshirt and long bluejean legs like articulated stovepipes. A high forehead and pointed chin gave her face the look of a brown egg poised on the small end, and her long crinkly black hair was tied in a ponytail with a shoelace. (5)

If Jason Hemmer is simian, Shandy is avian. The simian associations suggest brutishness and violence, whereas the avian ones suggest, in addition to awkwardness, fragility and a strange kind of beauty. The egg image also suggests potential; Shandy is a kind of embryo, a bird still in its shell, an idea explored further in the novel and which has been discussed elsewhere (see Grace). However, it's worth note that Hemmer's simianism is not, or not simply, a fact about him but is a reflection of how Shandy sees him: the initial description of him is narrated in the third person, but is filtered through Shandy's perspective. Similarly, the initial description of Shandy follows her own gaze, as she looks at her own reflection in a plate-glass window. The objective physical reality of the characters, therefore, is tempered by subjectivity, and the animal associations are therefore somewhat qualified. Furthermore, an image reflected in a window is translucent at best; in looking *at* herself, Shandy is also looking *through* herself. The insubstantiality of the image suggests the problematics of perception. When looking at a reflection—and when reflecting—what is one doing? The image's transparency suggests further that the process of examining the self—and the other—requires not merely looking at what is on the surface but seeing through the superficial to what lies beyond.

Certainly, what lies beyond literally in this novel, the Dumplings, are imaged in negative animal terms. The description of the first full manifestation of their power likens them to a pack, and there are numerous other instances of explicit animal associations, which translate into how they are treated when they are trapped and caged. This

passage from the sequence describing the Dumplings' coalescence as a powerful and dangerous group makes the animal metaphor explicit: "Every ugly thought locked in the mind broke free and dragged with it the animal hates and terrors of childhood, the horrors of the Blowup, and all the small bestiaries accumulated by even the sanest mind living the calmest life" (37). Here we have Gotlieb's first bestiary, and superficially at least it is populated by creatures manifesting the conventional negative associations of animals: hate, terror, violence, and so on. However, it is crucial to note that these beasts remain resolutely human and manifest animal traits found in "even the sanest mind living the calmest life." If the pack unleashes something, it is not something that can be scapegoated, cast off and caged. Rather, it is something inherent in humans, merely clarified and exposed. The animal, then, is not ultimately other but rather inherently human. The novel renders this point explicit later on, when the townsfolk themselves form a mob, as did the Dumplings earlier. When Shandy comes upon them, she hears them "raising their voices in the dark animal cry of the mob" (99). One of their leaders is even named Fox; Gotlieb here engages in a conventional example of characterization by comparison. Fox, as the fox is traditionally seen, is a sly, treacherous, predatory vermin.

The Dumplings may be dangerous, then, but so are the "normal" humans. Consigning these mutant children to a prison, the Dump—the name of which of course suggests that its inhabitants are refuse, garbage, discarded by the culture that produced them—fails as a humane, or even sensible, solution to the problem they represent. The novel ultimately seeks a model for controlling and reintegrating the Dumplings into the larger human culture, rather than suppressing and alienating them, and in doing so its perspective anticipates the more complex and nuanced treatment of the animal other in Gotlieb's later works.

All of Gotlieb's SF novels other than *Sunburst* are set in the far future and in space (we visit Earth occasionally, but most of these works are set on other planets), at a time in which the Galactic Federation coordinates relations between various worlds and species. Unlike *Sunburst*, these novels feature not only extraterrestrials but also characters who are literally rather than metaphorically animals, though often animals modified to possess sentience. In *O Master Caliban!*, for instance, two important characters are a gibbon, Esther, and a goat, Yigal, the latter of whom is quite fond of Montaigne. These animals are of course anthropomorphized to some extent, by virtue of the genetic modifications and mutations (radiation again plays a major role) that have given them sentience and speech, but Gotlieb

manages to retain a sense of their animal difference nevertheless. Despite becoming a surrogate mother for the protagonist, for instance—he even calls her multi—“Esther is definitely a gibbon,” as Douglas Barbour notes (114), and she behaves consistently as one throughout the novel. Her animal status, however, is only gradually revealed over the first few pages, as we read of her engaging in such human activities as making stew, talking, and so on, while encountering occasional details that are puzzling. We are told “she sat on his shoulder” (1) as she feeds Sven the stew, for instance, a statement we discover is literal in the subsequent paragraph when Sven lifts her off his shoulder and places her on the table. In the context of an SF novel, we might therefore imagine she is an alien or some sort of mutated human, so the revelation that she is in fact a gibbon is still surprising. Even in SF, sentient animals are more of a surprise than are aliens. Gotlieb plays on readerly expectation to shock us into the recognition that despite being a monkey, “With her intelligence exponentially increased, Esther had become simply another species of extraterrestrial human being” (11).

In this statement, Gotlieb articulates one of the central theses of her mature work. Gotlieb repeatedly insists on the commonality among all sentient creatures, not merely humanoid ones. Indeed, she has the feline protagonists (technically both alien and animal, as they come from another planet but were originally earth cats taken there by a powerful alien and modified to be given intelligence) of her Ungrukh trilogy refer to each other as “man” and “woman.” One might argue that such a practice is anthropocentric speciesism, as some have argued that Ursula K. Le Guin’s use of the masculine pronoun to describe the ambisexual characters in her novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* perpetuates the sexist stereotypes the novel attempts to challenge. However, just as the narrator of *The Left Hand of Darkness* is confronted by his own sexist preconceptions when one of the ambisexuals begins to assume female form, so is the reader shocked out of his (or her) preconceptions about that character, as derived from the pronoun reference, when that transformation takes place.³ A simple matter of language use strips the implications of the

³. After originally defending it from such criticisms, Le Guin has since repudiated this pronoun use, arguing that the generic use of “he/him” “does in fact exclude women from discourse” (15) and expressing the wish that she had created some new pronoun form (she reports using her created pronouns in readings from the book, but she has not revised the book—as of 2006—to eliminate the gendered pronouns). While it may be true that the generic pronoun has this effect, however, what Le Guin perhaps fails to recognize is the power of the moment in the book at which Genly Ai, the (male) narrator, must confront his own preconceptions about sex when Estraven,

reader's preconceptions bare at this point. Similarly, by requiring her readers to associate cats or other overtly alien and animal creatures with themselves, Gotlieb arguably does not so much transform her animal aliens into humans as she forces her readers to redefine what human means.

The point is rendered more strongly in *O Master Caliban!* in its treatment of animal experimentation. Edvard Dahlgren is a scientist interested in modifying life forms to live in inimical environments, so he has come to the hostile planet Barrazan IV with a team of scientists, robot (or erg) labourers, and experimental animals. Esther and Yigal both emerge from these experiments and might be seen as positive results, but the novel does not simply present animal experimentation as a good or even a necessary thing. Indeed, the plot focuses on the ergs' acquisition of intelligence and their own engagement in experimentation in imitation of their human creators. The results are various monstrosities (in physical terms, anyway), human and otherwise. However, only some of the physical monsters are moral monsters, as well; many are not. The novel clearly critiques the treatment of living creatures (sentient or not) as the subjects of experiment. Dahlgren's cold, clinical attitude is reflected in his assertion that "any organic creature is a kind of machine because it operates by the laws of physics and chemistry, and even uses metal in various forms" (192).

While this may be true, the implications of thinking in such terms are explored in the novel when the creatures of pure metal take over and imitate their creators. Dahlgren tries to differentiate between himself and these mechanistic monsters by considering that "He had manipulated flesh, flexed limbs. But I did not do that to torment. Did you not, Dahlgren? Only to be powerful" (162). Dahlgren himself comes here to question the purity and benevolence of his own motives. Indeed, the ergs explicitly model themselves on Dahlgren, so the pain, torture, and death they cause are linked, if not to Dahlgren's intentions, at last to his practice: "Dahlgren had made and marred at will; so had they" (192). The novel confronts Dahlgren's facile self-justifications and forces him to see anew his reality when the ergs treat him literally the way they treat their animal experiments and lock Dahlgren up in a Pit with these creatures. The most dangerous creatures in the Pit, however, are not the ones derived from animals

his friend and rescuer, begins to become biologically female. The fact that Estraven has been "he" throughout the book forces this recognition on the reader as well as on Genly. The reader, like Genly (who, as narrator, is the one responsible for the pronoun choices), is caught by his (or her) preconceptions. Had Genly been as enlightened as some critics and ultimately Le Guin herself wished, some of the point of the novel would have been lost.

but rather the clones of Dahlgren produced by the ergs as “degraded images [that] did not even have the ugly dignity of proto-men who ate lice and fleas but carried promises in their gonads” (256). These clones are animalistic parodies of the human (even referred to in the text as Yahoos). Nevertheless, Dahlgren immediately recognizes them as reflections of himself: he “immediately recognized his bestial image in the cage when erg-Dahlgren’s appearance, which he believed must be the truest reproduction possible, did not bother him. He could not even find himself in Sven. Yet he recognized the beast” (113). The easy hierarchizing of self and other, human and beast, falls apart.

The most explicit exploration of this idea occurs in Gotlieb’s books about the Ungrukh, largely because Gotlieb shifts her focus from humans as protagonists to animals as protagonists. The Ungrukh are leopards transplanted to an inimical planet and modified to be given sentience by one of the Qumedni, a race of virtually omnipotent energy beings that figures in several of her novels and short stories (indeed, they first appear in “Phantom Foot,” the first story she sold, though not the first one published). One might see in them something of an echo of Dahlgren in Gotlieb’s previous novel; what they do for the Ungrukh, Dahlgren has done in a more limited way for Esther and Yigal. Despite being given sentience (and, in the case of females, telepathy), however, the Ungrukh remain resolutely cats, as Esther remained resolutely a gibbon. Their animal appearance repeatedly governs how humans view them—it even has affected how one major critic reads their stories, as I noted earlier: David Ketterer has identified a relatively minor human character as the protagonist of the Ungrukh novels.

However, the perspective of the books is unquestionably that of the Ungrukh, not of their human friends or enemies. Indeed, early in the first volume, Gotlieb plays on readerly preconceptions about what is normal and what is alien (as she did in the first chapter of *O Master Caliban!*) by having Prandra, the female and telepathic Ungrukh, feel disturbed at the prospect of coming among such strange and alien beings as humans: “She thought it might be more pleasant to make the acquaintance of some of Solthree’s big cats” (*Judgment* 20). Just as we might expect a human when visiting an exotic new place to be interested in socializing with the locals rather than with the local wildlife, these giant cats when visiting earth imagine visiting not with the self-identified superior species but instead with earth’s felines. The human is rendered other, alien, and human preconceptions about the other are therefore undercut.

They are confronted directly later in the novel, when Prandra

recognizes that her animal appearance governs how she is viewed by at least some humans. Captured by a criminal named Quantz and his cohorts, not all of whom are human, Prandra reflects, “A few in that company were scaled, and one or two had tentacles, but all were what a Solthree would call ‘humanoid.’ She and Lokh were not, and she knew what the difference meant to Quantz. A pair of skins . . .” (159; ellipses in original). Some aliens may have some animal features, such as scales or tentacles (common features, in fact, for evil or horrifying aliens in SF—Wells’s Martians are tentacled, for example), but if their structure is essentially humanoid, they can pass, or at least be given provisional status as humanoid, if not actually human. Even the term “humanoid,” however, is subverted. Whatever valorising power it has, the passage makes clear, is human-specific; as its etymology shows, “humanoid” is a specifically human (Solthree) term to describe those who conform in some significant respects to human form. As an absolute measure of one’s status, however, it is meaningless—except to humans for whom physical form defines one’s nature and function. And the relative unimportance of humanness is stressed by the fact that humans are called “Solthrees,” or inhabitants of Sol’s third planet, a term that localizes them and diminishes their significance in the larger context of GalFed (which is NOT centred on Earth).

As “animals”—as not humanoids—Prandra and Khreng are accorded, by Quantz, no value except the value of being a hunter’s trophy. Indeed, and perhaps overstressing the point, Gotlieb has Quantz not simply kill them but actually release them in order to hunt them down, in a sort of play on and inversion of “The Most Dangerous Game,” in Gotlieb’s version of which in fact the most dangerous game is not the human being but the animal. What makes humans human does not therefore make them superior. Indeed, in *Emperor, Swords, Pentacles*, the second Ungrukh novel, another Ungrukh, Raanung, goes up against another human who can’t see past Raanung’s animal body: “Ever look at yourself in a mirror? I don’t make deals with animals,” he says (243). When the human tries to kill him, Raanung acts:

Raanung, sadly, waited for the hand to draw the gun from the zipper opening. Then he moved. His long tail whipped out to hook Hands between the cords of his nape and pull him forward so that one padded forepaw could slap the side of his neck. It broke with a crunch. (243)

Because Raanung is an animal, the man believes in his superiority and in his ability to kill Raanung easily. The human’s name is Hands, and the reference to “the hand” in the passage underscores the point. The hand is the specific human physical feature most often

pointed to (no pun intended) as the one that differentiates humans from animals. The term “paw” tends to be applied to the animal appendage, even when it is in fact a hand, Heidegger’s assertions about the animal lack of hands notwithstanding. For Gotlieb, even if the animal does not have a hand (as Raanung does not), tail and paw can trump Hands anyway. The human looks in the mirror and sees itself, and therefore assumes that that reflection expresses the sum total of sentience. That which is not a reflection of the human does not reflect, in effect.

Gotlieb, however, stresses that such a view is blinkered. The animal is not an alien other but a genuine reflection, and reflector (a point implicit perhaps in the use of reflection in *Sunburst*, as well).⁴ The point is literalized in *A Judgment of Dragons* in Quantz’s fate. When Prandra defeats Quantz, she does so with her telepathic powers: she “smashed the brittle walls of Quantz’s mind to free the red beasts of fear and rage among the synapses” (188). Quantz is, briefly and subjectively, transformed from man to pig (the title of this section of the novel, no doubt for obvious reasons, is “Nebuchadnezzar”), his body being apparently forced for a time to reflect his inner animalism. The inability to see beyond the animal, in effect, reflects the animal status of the observer.

In short, and in conclusion, Phyllis Gotlieb problematizes the concept of a human/animal divide in her SF. She employs the animal, both metaphorically and literally, to explore human presuppositions about what being human means. She does so in largely metaphorical terms in *Sunburst*, but in *O Master Caliban!* and the Ungrukhl trilogy (*A Judgment of Dragons*, *Emperor*, *Swords*, *Pentacles*, and *The Kingdom of the Cats*), she deals more directly and literally with animals as characters. While arguably Gotlieb does not fully reconcile the human and the animal, since she does retain the association between certain negative emotional traits and animalism, she does significantly undermine the notion that form in and of itself is a reliable or even useful guide to determining what is animal and what is human. Humanity as a concept ceases to apply to homo sapiens and

4. Reflection is a major motif in *O Master Caliban!* as well; the scientist Sven Dahlgren is to be replaced by a robot, or erg, double, who looks exactly like him, a point reiterated throughout the novel. One of the novel’s ironies, indeed, is that the machine Dahlgren is in some respects more human than Dahlgren. As noted earlier, Dahlgren has been cloned, as well, providing further mirror images in which Dahlgren is horrified to see himself.

even to humanoids in Gotlieb's work, and as a result, her readers are asked to reconsider what they are.

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