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Localism, Locavorism, and Animal Rights in Olga Tokarczuk's Novel *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead*¹

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Abstract

Relying on insights from CAS (Critical Animal Studies), especially Vasile Stanescu's and Robert C. Jones's recent work on locavorism, and the studies of localism (by Andrew Stables, David Hess, Timothy O'Riordan and Doreen Massey, inter alia), the paper presents a reading of Olga Tokarczuk's 2009 novel Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead which highlights the conflict between localism and locavorism on the one side, and universal animal rights on the other. Localism, often greeted as a form of resistance to globalization for its assertion of the distinctiveness of place and the reaffirmation of boundaries (O'Riordan), and locavorism, a neologism which suggests that eating locally, animals included, is the only road to environmental sustainability, are treated in Tokarczuk's novel as mere ideological justification for the violence against animals, the natural world, and the less privileged members of the human community, at the hands of traditionalist local authorities.

Keywords: *Animal rights; Globalization; Hunting; Localism; Locavorism*

Introduction

The title of Olga Tokarczuk's 2009 novel, *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead*⁴, is a paraphrase of one of William Blake's *Proverbs of Hell* (1793); Blake's trademark "dialogue and dialectic of contraries" (Mitchell 1989, 46) are prominent in its treatment of localism and globalization, as well as the specific expressions of localism, such as locavorism and hunting, and universal animal rights (variously and contradictorily supported throughout the novel by "creaturely ethics", reinterpreted Plato, and astrology). Before we start discussing the novel, however, it is necessary to attempt to delineate the terms such as *localism* (and, with it, unavoidably, *globalization*), *locavorism*, and *animal rights*, as these represent the coordinates within which our discussion moves. Localism can be defined widely as "the promotion of the local over any other level of social interaction" (O'Riordan, 2001, 37), or, "the strategic privileging of the local as a key site of social organization and civic engagement" (Featherstone et al., 2012, 177); its distinctive feature is being virtually inseparable from globalization, as it is frequently seen as a response to it, in "a vexed, vexing dichotomy" (Heldke, 2006, 390). While

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⁴ Abbreviated to *Drive Your Plow...* in the rest of the text.



globalization itself is a concept which is difficult both to define and to historicize⁵, some characteristics and outcomes of contemporary global trends can nonetheless be identified. These include

the promotion and domination of Western culture and capitalism to the exclusion of all other cultures and economic systems [resulting in] a loss of social diversity and the disappearance of local distinctiveness and community in favour of global culture and society [further resulting in] feelings of loss of control by the individual over their lives, the inability of national governments to act in the best interests of its citizens, a fear of blandness and a society based on consumption rather than collective good (O’Riordan, 2001, 26).

It is to express these fears and experiences that George Ritzer coined the effective term “McDonaldization” (1998); Jim Ockey, likewise, names the emerging global culture “McWorld”, seeing it as “superficial, anodyne, universal culture for which borders and nations no longer matter” (Ockey, 2001, 57). More neutrally, Andrew Stables identifies “standardization, impersonalism, a mechanistic approach to life, and universal ethics” (2019, 7) as the basic characteristics of globalization, aided, in particular, by the third and fourth industrial revolutions; the most pronounced negative outcomes, in his opinion, include “a sense that many people and communities have been ‘left behind’ and a democratic deficit, whereby local voices are increasingly ignored” (ibidem).

But the issues stemming from globalization are not only, or even primarily, social and cultural. In combination with the neoliberal “informalization of work” and “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey, 2005, 116) since the late 1970s, globalization has produced both intense precarity and immense demographic shifts, specifically, “the massive transfer of the world’s peasant populations to camps of surplus labour in urban locations” (Araghi, 2009, 112). As for more narrowly political consequences, the most unsettling one is what Michael Aglietta terms “the globalization of the state”, in operation since the early 1980s, when “supranational institutions [...] successfully linked their lending/aid policies to the implementation of structural reform programs whose central component is divorcing the state from national regulation of capital” (Araghi, 1995, 355). The observed erosion of the nation-state in relation to capital has led Gary Teeple to conclude that “[g]lobalization is the close of the national history of capital and the beginning of the history of the expansion of capital sans nationality” (Ockey, 2001, 58). Eliding the issue of capital regulation altogether, Peter Singer also highlights the destruction of both nations and the nation-state as one of the outcomes of globalization: “Implicit in the term ‘globalization’ rather than the older ‘internationalization’ is the idea that we are moving beyond the era of growing ties between nations and are beginning to contemplate something beyond the existing conception of the nation-state” (Singer, 2002, 8).

⁵ While “[m]ost economic historians consider the long century before 1914 the first era of globalization” (Rodrik, 2012, 24), Goran Therborn, conversely, proposes the periodization of globalization which begins in the fourth century (“the globalization of religions”). He further divides it into six great epochs or waves, including the late fifteenth-century European colonial conquests, the nineteenth-century imperialism, as well as the post-WW2 and the post-Cold War period (Ritzer, 2011, 18).



In the context of such turbulent shifts, here barely touched upon, it is not surprising that globalization has also stimulated numerous anti-globalization movements and responses, including localism, some expressions of which are under attack in Tokarczuk's novel. Referring to "place and the distinctiveness of that place" (O'Riordan, 2001, 37), localism seems to "to run counter to globalization in reaffirming boundaries" (ibidem), thus appearing as an attractive potential solution to at least some of the issues stemming from the current global trends. It is, indeed, marketed by its advocates and policy makers as a way to amplify the local voices, protect the sense of identity and political community effectively bypassing the democratic deficit, and a way, even, to help the environment ("eco-localism"). Yet localism as a policy is burdened with its own problems, as it tends to be "exclusionist" (O'Riordan, 2001, 41), "protectionist, conservative and backward looking" (Stables, 2019, 11), and to both rely on, and further reinforce, "reactionary nationalisms, competitive localisms or introverted obsessions with 'heritage'" as Doreen Massey warns (1994, 151), and Tokarczuk reveals in her novel. Ideologically, moreover, localism plays a significant role in normalizing neoliberalism and globalization: "much of the contemporary political appeal to the 'local' actually rests upon arguments regarding allegedly uncontrollable supralocal transformations, such as globalization, the financialization of capital, the erosion of the national state, and the intensification of interspatial competition" (Brenner & Theodore, 2002, 341). Additionally, "[t]he way that it considers and constructs places in isolation avoids an engagement with the marked inequalities that exist within and between places" (Featherstone et al., 2012, 179). Another criticism levelled at localism targets its political ineffectiveness on the assumption that the negative outcomes of globalization can only be fought by "big" national governments (Lake 2002; Parvin 2009).

With the growing awareness of the climate change, and the loss of biodiversity and environmental degradation associated with global industrial food production in particular, localism has also been increasingly prominent in discussions surrounding food, environmentalism, and sustainability. In this specific context, localism again tends to be seen as a desirable alternative to globalization, or, quite literally here, the "McDonaldization" of the world: yet again, the debate is far from settled.

For proponents of the first view, globalization is the best way to protect the environment for human use by adopting common standards, goals and resources that are managed on a global scale. Opponents to this view see globalization, particularly as manifested in the global economy, as the biggest cause of environment degradation. Instead, we should deconstruct global institutions and local communities should have self-determination and control over their own resources (O'Riordan, 2001, 39).

The proponent of the second view, Fred Curtis, for instance, states with conviction: "The road to environmental sustainability lies in the creation of local, self-reliant, community economies. This is the central argument of the economic paradigm that I will call eco-localism" (Curtis, 2003, 83). Philip Ireland and Katharine McKinnon, too, argue in favor of "strategic localism" as a way of adapting to, and surviving, climate change (2013, 158-166). Yet, as early as 1996, anthropologist Kay Milton warned against the idealization of local communities as guardians of environment, referring to this popular view as the "myth of primitive ecological wisdom", which is being embraced by eco-centric environmentalists, anti-globalists, and indigenous peoples (202).

One of the clearest messages that anthropologists can give to environmentalists is that human beings have no 'natural' propensity for living sustainably with their environment. Primitive ecological wisdom is a myth, not only in the anthropological sense, as something whose truth is treated as a dogma, but also in the popular sense, as something that is untrue, a fantasy (Milton, 1996, 222).

An aspect of the myth of primitive ecological wisdom, *locavorism* is the twenty-first century neologism which proposes that eating locally produced food, including meat and animal products⁶, is a way to achieve and maintain environmental sustainability, thus helping the damaged planet. Equally seductive is the framing of locavorism as politics, i.e., "ethical consumer resistance to the control of food by transnational corporations" (Haedicke, 2015, 387), rather than the lifestyle choice largely inaccessible to the less affluent⁷. Although David J. Hess rightly warns that "[l]ocal food can cover a broad range of production techniques, of which *only some* would be labeled organic or even environmentally friendly" (2008, 632, italics added), a near-consensus, especially in the Western public, seems to have been achieved whereby locavorism is promoted as environmentally beneficent primarily because it "conserves energy and eliminates pollution by reducing the distance that food travels from farm to fork" – the notorious "food miles" (Haedicke, 2015, 387).

Additionally, some vocal promoters of locavorism, such as the feminist scholar Kathy Rudy (2011) and the popular food writer Michael Pollan (2009), represent it as a way to reduce the scale of factory farming and ensure that the animals reared for food have much better living and dying conditions than they do now in global industrial farming. In their interpretations, locavorism, therefore, possesses an animal welfarist aspect as well, which should only add to its attractiveness. Responding to these claims from the perspective of Critical Animal Studies devoted to animal rights and animal liberation, Vasile Stanescu, on the other hand, harshly criticizes the concept of locavorism. Like Hess, Stanescu calls attention to the fact that "many farms that market themselves as either 'local' or 'free-range' still engage in the same practices as their 'factory farm' counterparts" (Stanescu, 2013, 103) – i.e., they are neither environmentally friendly nor more humane to the animals. "In truth", Robert C. Jones details,

an overwhelming majority of animals raised on 'local' farms are sent to industrial slaughterhouses, butchered alongside their kin raised in factory farms. Animals raised in 'humane' conditions routinely suffer branding, dehorning, forced impregnation, tail docking (without anesthesia), overcrowding, beak trimming, castration, tooth filing, ear notching, and nose ring piercing (2021, 126).

Just like Kay Milton who warns against the "myth of primitive ecological wisdom", Stanescu, moreover, notices that at the root of locavorism lies "more a pastoral return to a supposed former time of Edenic innocence than an actual or effective environmental agriculture policy to effectively combat global climate change" (Stanescu, 2019, 6). While Tokarczuk's novel does not feature either industrial or local farms where animals are raised for food – as opposed to the barely sketched horror of the fox farm – it does depict hunting as another expression

⁶ This is clearly conveyed by other terms for locavorism which Robert C. Jones lists, such as "compassionate carnivorism, the sustainable meat movement, the humane meat movement, the happy meat movement, the nose-to-tail food movement, and the conscientious omnivore movement" which relies on adjectives like "'free range,' 'grass fed,' 'organic,' 'natural,' and 'cage free'" (2021, 126).

⁷ It is the world's poor who depend on, and are commonly employed in, global industrial food production.



of locavorism and as a highly dangerous corollary of the myth of environmental sustainability practiced by local, traditional communities.

The last concept to be defined in this introduction, *animal rights*, refers to the contemporary theoretical and political position which has been steadily gaining support since 1975⁸ among a number of philosophers, scientists, and activists in the West, according to which “animals are *subjects-of-a-life* [...] conscious subjects who have a stake in how they are treated and whether they live or die” (Calarco, 2020, 13, italics in the original). The practical outcome of this shift in how nonhuman animals are theorized (the so-called “animal turn”) is the request to abolish all human use of animals – for food, clothing, entertainment, hunting, in medicine and cosmetics industry etc., and to change their legal standing into “rights-bearing individuals who ought never to be treated in a merely instrumental manner” (ibidem). In other words, CAS scholars and theorists, as well as animal rights activists, insist that nonhuman animals have the right to live life free from human interventions, as well as the political right to citizenship (Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2016, 71-116). Tokarczuk is herself a vegetarian and an outspoken activist for animal rights; significantly, her protagonist in *Drive Your Plow...* does not ground her argument for animal rights in animal sentience, their moral relevance, or Peter Singer’s legacy, the equal consideration of interests. Decidedly contrarian, Duszejko places the emphasis on animal vulnerability to death which is shared with humans, and, much more controversially, on their having souls. Duszejko’s animal rights praxis, moreover, is transferred from the field of nonviolent political activism and peaceful advocacy into violence and murder, thus forcing the reader to ponder the crucial questions of crime, legality, and the right to life and death in relation to both human and nonhuman animals.

Localism, locavorism, and animal rights in *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead*

Drive Your Plow... was published in Polish in 2009, and translated into English by Antonia Lloyd-Jones nine years later – to borrow one of its most prominent metaphors and themes, it took this novel a long time to cross borders. Described as “a perfect noir” (Scridon 2019), an “ecological thriller” (Weber 2019), and “a funny and philosophically complex whodunit”, (Crosley 2019), *Drive Your Plow...* is set in postmillennial Europe, in and above an anonymous village located in the Klodzko valley near the Polish-Czech border. This is where the narrator and the protagonist, an elderly woman called Janina Duszejko, once a bridge engineer, translates William Blake with her former student, grieves for her two lost dogs (the “Little Girls”), and obsesses over a series of mysterious murders taking place in the area over a one-year period. All the murder victims were hunters, poachers, slaughterhouse and fox farm owners when alive; their bodies, moreover, are found half-eaten by bugs or surrounded by deer hoof prints, and Duszejko, as she prefers to be called, starts believing that it is the animals who are taking revenge upon the humans who harm them – or so she would have the reader believe. She tries to alert local police to this theory, writing long letters, providing historical examples of animals being tried and sentenced by human courts for similar crimes, but, expectedly, without much success. The classic murder mystery narrative – the protagonist is even unhappily compared to Miss Marple in one review (Perry 2018) – is intersected with parts where Duszejko expounds on her idiosyncratic theories about the nature of the soul and

⁸ Peter Singer’s groundbreaking *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals* was published in 1975.

astrology, seemingly lending support to the “vengeful animal” hypothesis: the horoscopes of all murder victims, in Duszejko’s interpretation, predict death brought about by an animal.

Retold like this, the novel does not seem to offer much on the subject of localism (and, unavoidably, globalization), being much more vocal, if quite unconventional, on the subject of animal rights. However, the opposite is true. *Drive Your Plow...* plays with the tensions and contradictions between the local and the global (including, but not limited to, the universal ethics of animal rights), allowing them, Blake-like, to mutually expose their flaws and contradictions. Fully aware of the devastating effects of globalization on both local economy and local environment, the novel, crucially, exposes localism as a dangerous ideology and emphatically *not* the solution to the undeniable ills of globalization.

Globalization looms in the background as the inescapable reality of global neoliberal capitalism, which “globalizes the state”, dispossesses huge sections of society and then punishes the dispossessed (Wacquant 2009), and is equally violent towards the natural world, if there is even a hint of (more) profit. In one of the early scenes, when the mourners come to the first murder victim’s house, Duszejko notes that “[m]ost of them were former state-farm workers, now on benefits, though occasionally employed to fell trees” (Tokarczuk, 2019, 37). The short sentence effectively summarizes the locally experienced consequences of global trends – the destruction of national, state-owned agriculture and jobs in favor of multinational corporations; the social isolation and marginalization associated with life on benefits for the losers of globalization, and their precarious short-term employment found only in the destruction of the natural world. Significantly, Duszejko adds: “Or, they doggedly ran small, unprofitable farms that were kept alive by subsidies from the European Union” (ibidem). Subsidies are clearly a lip service paid to the myth of “primitive ecological wisdom” of local communities, and the largely ineffective policies of localism. In reality, local small farms and businesses, as David J. Hess details, and Duszejko conveys using the adjective “unprofitable”, cannot hope to compete with the multinational companies. The global capitalist imperative of exploitation and consumption, moreover, extends to the totality of the natural world, including what lies underground in the mostly uninhabitable plateau where Duszejko’s village is situated. While checking on the empty houses she takes care of during the winter, Duszejko comes across the one belonging to “the richest Person in the neighbourhood”, Innerd, who will also end up as the murder victim. “Apparently he had bought the house because of the land it occupied. Apparently he bought the land to turn it into a quarry one day. Apparently the whole Plateau is fit to be a quarry. Apparently we’re living on a goldmine here, gold that’s known as granite” (53). In the meantime, Innerd is renting the house for profit, despite already owning “property in every valley and on every plain” (ibidem). Innerd’s behaviour does not only offer a local example of the logic and mechanism of global capital accumulation, but also illustrates a danger inherent in localism which lies in its “refusal to engage with power relations and inequalities within communities” (Featherstone et al., 2012, 178). The outcome of such refusal is “that the default actors who are empowered by emerging forms of localism are likely to be those with the resources, expertise and social capital to become involved in the provision of services and facilities” (ibidem), like Innerd.

But it is not only the natural world which is targeted and violated as the source of raw material such as wood or granite, at the cost of the destruction of both local communities and entire ecosystems and for the profit of the few. Global capitalism and “globalization-driven hyper-



consumerism” (Stević & Tsang, 2019, 78) are at the root of intensified animal abuse, too, taking place in Innerd’s fox farm, his slaughterhouse, and his meat-processing plant, the products of which go beyond the Polish borders. Another kind of meat for consumption – the bodies of poverty-stricken girls from Eastern Europe, themselves the victims of the global processes of dispossession – also crosses national borders to end up on sale in Innerd’s local brothel.

Globalization’s supposed or real opposite, localism, is treated with an equal amount of condemnation. As already established, localism tends to be interpreted as a form of resistance to globalization for its focus on the distinctiveness of the place and the reaffirmation of boundaries implicit in it (O’Riordan, 2001, 37). Usually criticized for its tendency towards exclusionism and political ineffectiveness, localism in Tokarczuk’s novel fares much worse, being depicted as mere ideological justification for the violence against animals and the natural world in the hands of morally corrupt local authorities. As if heeding Doreen Massey’s warning against “reactionary nationalisms, competitive localisms or introverted obsessions with ‘heritage’”, *Drive Your Plow...* paints a grotesque picture of what it means to turn to tradition in the twenty-first century, which is a common enough response to the perceived threats of the loss of national identity associated with globalization. In the novel, it is the local authorities (a police commander, a successful local businessman, a politician, and a priest), with their attitude of unexamined, God-supported human and male supremacy, and hunting as an expression of both hyper-masculine tradition and locavorism, that offer chilling insights into the dangers which “appeals to the local” (Brenner & Theodore, 2002, 341) pose to the natural world, the nonhuman animals, and the human beings who live by different, more cosmopolitan values. In fact, Tokarczuk’s novel perfectly illustrates that the “valorization of the ‘local’... may be less about the radical affirmation of an ethic of community or care, and more to do with the production of less positive parochialism and nationalism” (Winter, 2003, 30). But “without contraries is no progression”: without global there is no local. As Tokarczuk reveals in the *Acknowledgements*, the sermon that glorifies hunting delivered by Father Rustle near the end of the novel represents “a compilation of genuine sermons by hunt chaplains sourced from the internet” (275).

Assaulted by the twin forces of increased global consumption and violent local traditions such as hunting, nonhuman animals and their rights – the right to life, and the right to freedom from human use – are defended in the novel by “creaturely ethics” (Pick, 2011, 193), and Duszejko’s theory of the soul, as well as her literally murderous praxis. An argument which can be labeled as creaturely ethics appears in the first few pages of the novel. These masterfully exemplify Tokarczuk’s dialectical approach, and introduce death as an instance of border-crossing, with which the novel will remain obsessed. Faced with the dead body of her animal-abusing neighbor whom she nicknamed Big Foot, Duszejko engages in Blakean dialectic of contraries: overwhelmed with pity, she first childishly and poignantly states that “even someone as foul as he was did not deserve death. Who on earth does?” (6). Yet, moments later, it occurs to Duszejko that her beloved wild animals will be free from this poacher with his nasty snares, and that the dog Big Foot kept in a cold shed and starved would be liberated from his abuse, too. Death, Duszejko realizes, can be beneficial. “[W]hat a good thing death can be, how just and fair, like a disinfectant, or a vacuum cleaner” (ibidem). Death, moreover, acts as a great leveler. For Duszejko, who is always keenly, and often lovingly, aware of the

nonhuman life surrounding her⁹, death does not merely abolish socioeconomic distinctions among people, but the distinction between the human and the nonhuman animals as well – it is no accident she claims Big Foot looked *inhuman* in death (8). Before death, all animals, including humans, are the same; they are bodies, they are matter, and they are, inescapably, creatures. “The same fate awaits me too, and Oddball, and the Deer outside; one day we shall all be nothing more than corpses” (6), Duszejko muses, voicing “creaturely fellowship by default, self-evident and undeniable, in a world of imbalance and injustice” (Pick, 2011, 184). The insight and its implications are what most human beings find radically unsettling and prefer not to dwell, let alone act on.

As for Big Foot, the shared vulnerability had not stirred any compassion for the animals when he was alive; it is revealed that he died having choked on a deer bone, facing the severed deer head “with half-closed eyes” (14). Reconstructing the event like a particularly poetic detective, Duszejko explicitly calls them both creatures.

He had caught the Deer in a snare, killed her, then butchered, roasted and eaten her body. One Creature had devoured another, in the silence and stillness of the Night. Nobody had protested, no thunderbolt had struck. And yet Punishment had come upon the devil, though no one's hand had guided death” (ibidem).

It is here, in this rich passage, that the argument for universal animal rights emerges, founded on the basis of animal embodiment, their materiality, and exposure to death shared with humans. In this particular instance, animal rights are virtually indistinguishable from what Anat Pick terms creaturely ethics. “A creaturely ethics [...] does not depend on fulfilling any preliminary criteria of subjectivity and personhood. Its source lies in the recognition of the materiality and vulnerability of all living bodies, whether human or not” (Pick, 2011, 193). If both human and nonhuman animals are equal as creatures before death, moreover, “Punishment” for disrespecting that equality, and the universal right to life implicit in it, is the same for all, though Duszejko misleadingly attributes it to “no one's hand”.

However, in keeping with Tokarczuk's dialectical approach, later in the novel, Duszejko will ground the argument for animal rights in the direction opposite to creaturely ethics: not in the animals' materiality and vulnerability to death shared with humans (which ought to create solidarity and abolish species-based hierarchies), but in the “spark of brightness”, or the soul common to all living beings. Reworking Plato's myth of the soul from *Phaedrus*, and freely, irreverently mixing it with astrology, Duszejko arrives at a decidedly anti-Platonic (and anti-Christian) theory of the equality of souls in different bodies.

Sparks come from the very source of light and are made of the purest brightness – so say the oldest legends. When a human Being is to be born, a spark begins to fall. First, it flies through the darkness of outer space, then through galaxies, and finally, before it falls here, to Earth, the poor thing bumps into the orbits of planets. Each

⁹“I watched the Magpies as they bathed in a puddle of melted snow. They gave me sidelong glances, but clearly weren't afraid of me, for they boldly went on splattering the water with their wings and dipping their heads in it. Seeing their joy, no one could doubt how much fun a bath of this kind must be” (98). She then concludes: “How great and full of life the world is” (99). Yet this life which fills the world is in constant dialogue with destruction and death, and Duszejko is aware of this as well: “Spring is just a short interlude, after which the mighty armies of death advance; they're already besieging the city walls. We live in a state of siege. If one takes a close look at each fragment of a moment, one might choke with terror. Within our bodies disintegration inexorably advances; soon we shall fall sick and die.” (123-4).



of them contaminates the spark with some Properties, while it darkens and fades (218).

Though her theory begins by mentioning “a human Being”, by the end of the passage, Duszejko states with conviction: “As it [the spark] passes the Moon, it gains something as intangible as the soul. Only then does it fall to Earth, and is immediately clothed in a body. Human, animal or vegetable. That’s the way it is” (219). (The spelling of “human Being”, additionally, suggests that “human” is of lesser importance than “Being”.) The theory of all living beings having the same light-given soul provides support for animal rights contrary to the emphasis on their physicality and precarity; as such, moreover, it defiantly goes not only against Plato but the Platonic Christian doctrine which posits that soul is an exclusively human characteristic.

Christianity is not mentioned by chance. Duszejko’s universal soul theory, in fact, represents her belated response to the local priest, whom she nicknames Father Rustle, who visits her one January morning to exercise his pastoral power and reprimand her for crying for her lost dogs. Having instructed Duszejko to pray for herself, as “animals don’t have souls” (236), Father Rustle also expresses the traditional, anthropocentric view that “it’s wrong to treat animals as if they were people” (233). Not surprisingly, Father Rustle is also a hunter, and will end up as the last murder victim.

Hunting and eating animals are represented, by their advocates and practitioners, as ecologically sound, environmentally sustainable, and socially cohesive activities, as well as honoring the traditional way of life, and even the animals being hunted. In Garry Marvin’s view, for instance, hunting is “a ritual event which celebrates the wild animal and the human attempt to engage with it” (The Animal Studies Group, 2006, 26)¹⁰. In opposition to some modern Christian thinkers who recognize that “[h]umans are co-creatures with the rest of creation as well as bearers of the divine image” (Northcott, 2013, 155), Father Rustle looks back to Thomas Aquinas¹¹ and his own local traditions to sanctify this specific form of animal abuse. In the sermon that enrages Duszejko, Futher Rustle states that “hunters are the ambassadors and partners of the Lord God in the work of creation, in caring for game animals, in cooperation. Nature, among which man lives, needs help in order to flourish. Through their culls the hunters conduct the correct policy” (240). In keeping with Tokarczuk’s dialectic, Duszejko’s constantly tearful eyes see neither the celebration nor the flourishing associated with hunting, only the agony of the dying animal: “I went closer and saw that the shape was a Wild Boar, not quite an adult, lying in a pool of brown blood. The surrounding snow had been scraped away, exposing the ground, as if the Animal had thrashed about in convulsions” (100). The intolerance that throughout the novel the hunters show for an old woman who loves animals, moreover, is in line with the insights reached by Marti Kheel in her ecofeminist critique of hunting. Kheel posits that hunting is vital for masculine self-identity, and that in the eyes of the hunters there is not much difference between women and nonhuman animals: “[a]ll too often, women and animals have been relegated to the status of symbols, objects, or props for the construction of masculine self-identity” (1996, 41). Because of the

¹⁰ To his credit, Marvin admits that “the animal is sacrificed as the culmination of that celebration” (ibidem).

¹¹ Even sketching the status of animals in Christianity would go far beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that the long history of Christianity includes thinkers like Francis of Assisi, who regarded animals “as creatures with a moral status before God not much different from humans” (Northcott, 1996, 89), but also Thomas Aquinas, with whom “bestly, rather than creaturely, theology” begins in the Middle Ages, “when it becomes possible for Aquinas to hold that there is no intrinsic reason why a man should not treat a beast cruelly, for it has no intrinsic value” (Northcott, 2013, 277-8).

interchangeable status of women and animals under patriarchy, Duszejko's beloved dogs, it is revealed, were killed by the local hunters and fed to the caged foxes in the fox farm not only as a punishment for the old woman who dared cross the boundaries of age- and gender-appropriate behaviour, but also as a symbolic murder of the transgressor herself. The dogs, after all, were female, just like Duszejko.

Tokarczuk, thus, paints localism as regressive and equally violent as globalization; yet again, in keeping with the Blakean "dialectic of contraries", and going against "a populist construction of 'local people' that positions localities as undivided and singular" (Featherstone et al., 2012, 178), she glorifies an extremely local, individual, and highly transgressive resistance to animal abuse – Duszejko herself. Yet, Duszejko's rebellion against the harm done to fellow-souls in different bodies is not without its own contraries and contradictions. For instance, she justly rages against the hunting of deer, boars, and pheasants, and the keeping of foxes in tiny crates, yet consumes butter and cheese as if these were not products of animals living in equally horrific conditions. In a scene where Duszejko meets entomologist Borys Sznajder, he expresses a desire to buy "some milk from the cow" from her, and Duszejko replies, 'I don't have milk from a Cow, only from the Froggy, will that do?' and then explains that "The Froggy was the name of the village grocery store" (152). Dashing Sznajder's dreams of "pastoral Edenic innocence", Duszejko additionally reveals she does not even bake her own bread. But "milk from the Froggy" is of special significance, and it is worth lingering on. The phrase reveals that Duszejko, a passionate animal rights activist, still buys milk produced by the dairy industry. Keenly aware of how old women are viewed and treated in local, deeply patriarchal and religious communities, Duszejko remains silent on the treatment of dairy cows, whose reproductive cycles are abused for the sake of milk production, and who, when they become "spent" and "downers", end up slaughtered.

In the chapter "A Speech to a Poodle", moreover, Duszejko is in the police station. Like Coetzee's Elizabeth Costello (1999, 19-35), she delivers the impassioned, and utterly ignored, speech about the invisibility of animal suffering to most humans. It is only a "clean and well-groomed" (107) poodle who is apparently listening to her. For all the passion and truthful insights of the speech, the scene is ultimately ironic: if the poodle looks happy, healthy, and well-kept, he too must be eating animal flesh and participating, unwittingly, in the suffering Duszejko so correctly makes visible¹². Duszejko's Little Girls were obviously much loved, as well, but it is never stated clearly in the novel whether these dogs were vegetarians like their guardian, or whether they ate meat – and dogs and cats do need meat in order to be healthy. Tokarczuk does not necessarily undermine Duszejko or vegetarianism, but rather, in the spirit of the dialogue of contraries, calls attention to the fact that human acknowledgement of universal animal rights, and human love and proper care for (specific) animals, are not as easily reconciled as it would appear at first sight.

¹² Conversely, Katarzyna Nowak-McNeice interprets this scene as indicative of "a post-anthropocentric shift in an understanding of subjectivity" (2021, 172), which, she argues, Tokarczuk novel voices: "A dog can be, and indeed is, at the receiving end of the discourse. The fact that we cannot know what the dog's perception is, further stresses and reinforces the post-anthropocentric character of the interaction: the human feelings or thoughts are not projected on the nonhuman animal; the nonhuman is not reduced to a mere screen for human reflection" (ibidem). While it is undeniable that the human thoughts and feelings are not projected onto the animal in this case, such a reading disregards the irony of a clean, well-kept, and well-fed (i.e., non-vegan) dog being present while Duszejko talks about animals suffering in food industry, inter alia.



In fact, as the novel progresses, it becomes obvious that the conflicting perspectives of Duszejko and the others around her function like Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1794) when read together, satirizing each other, and revealing each other's shortcomings. Some reviewers saw the novel as a "pean to William Blake" (Perry 2018); this is true only if we remember that Blake himself held contradictory views about nature and animals. In *Auguries of Innocence* (1803), Blake, much like Duszejko, focuses on numerous instances of abuse against animals and, much like Duszejko, rages against them, openly calling for violence against the human perpetrators:

A Horse misused upon the Road
Calls to Heaven for Human blood
Each outcry of the hunted Hare
A fibre from the Brain does tear.

Yet, Blake also believed that "[t]he world of imagination is infinite and eternal, whereas the world of generation, is finite and temporal" (Lussier, 1996, 398), and he ascribed much greater value to the former. It is common knowledge, too, that his most famous poem, 'The Tyger', and its "innocent" counterpart, 'The Lamb', do not celebrate actual animals at all, but, read together, represent an ode to human imagination in all of its creative/destructive potential. For Blake, as Harold Bloom explains, "Human [...] is both descriptive and *honorific*" (2003, 118, italics added). Blake's radical humanism, therefore, stands at odds with the contemporary considerations of animal rights which, often overlapping with posthumanism, identify both anthropocentrism and humanism as the root cause of animal suffering. It is only in the context which recognizes Blake's insolvable contradictions that Duszejko can be seen as his rightful successor, and the novel as a "pean to William Blake"¹³.

¹³ In an inspired posthumanist reading of *Drive Your Plow...*, Katarzyna Nowak-McNeice argues that "Tokarczuk's novel is an example of a text which creates a space for a postanthropocentric representation of nonhuman animals" (2021, 175), which, intersected with "a nonhuman definition of a subject and a family" (ibidem) that Duszejko as the protagonist embodies and embraces, offers multifaceted, and much-needed, resistance to "the patriarchal, carnist society" (ibidem). Yet, the novel's insistence on William Blake (in addition to the title, and Duszejko and Dizzy's translation attempts, each chapter employs a quotation from Blake's work as an epigraph) allows for a reading that might position Duszejko not as a posthumanist icon, as Nowak-McNeice argues, but rather as the representative of that heightened, problematic, radical humanism which Blake celebrates. While Duszejko's initial motivation is to avenge her immediate family members, the nonhuman "Little Girls" killed by the hunters, she also murders the hunters as an act of justice in general, and a punishment for the crimes against animals unrecognized as such by anthropocentric cultures. (Upon seeing the dead boar, Duszejko explicitly states, "Must I be a witness to every Crime?" (Tokarczuk 2019, 94).) Acting out of love, extending compassion to the nonhuman world, breaking the law in the interest of justice, are, arguably, among the best *human* qualities; it is these qualities that are amplified in Duszejko, coupled as they are with the abovementioned, still very human, inconsistencies and paradoxes. Interestingly enough, despite claiming that the novel, by mixing genres, strongly reaches "beyond the traditional, humancentered representations" (2021, 170), Nowak-McNeice herself comes at a humancentered conclusion: "it is only when we see ourselves as animal, and when we acknowledge our entanglement with other animals, that we begin to see our responsibility to lead others to freedom" (2021, 175). Leading nonhuman others to freedom as a uniquely human responsibility (which must be both recognized and acted upon by humans) is certainly a post-anthropocentric proposition, but not necessarily posthumanist, as it still reserves rights and obligations for humans. In Tokarczuk's novel, it is this obligation that Duszejko takes upon herself, simultaneously "challenging and escaping the overlapping discriminatory apparatuses of ableism, carnism, and sexism" (Nowak-McNeice 2021, 168).

Conclusion

Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead centers on the opposition between localism and locavorism on the one side, and universal animal/creaturely rights on the other. Criticized for its political ineffectiveness, localism is still popularly greeted as a form of resistance to globalization; locavorism, for its supposed environmentally friendly properties. Both are depicted in Tokarczuk's novel as ideological justification for the brutality which animals, the natural world, and the nonconforming members of the human community receive at the hands of morally corrupt local authorities – including local police, local businessmen, and the local spiritual leader who wields Christian doctrine of the soul to stifle compassion for nonhuman animals in an old woman. The novel abounds in instances of challenging and crossing various boundaries and borders, performed, for the most part, by the narrator and the protagonist who disrespects the boundaries of gender- and age-appropriate behaviour, the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman, but also care and crime. Being highly critical of localism, and ending with Duszejko's literal crossing of the Polish-Czech border, *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead*, however, does not necessarily endorse localism's (supposed or real) opposite, globalization, apart from the "universal ethics" associated with it (Stables, 2019, 7). But Duszejko praxis of universal animal rights, contrary to her theory, is extreme, anti-anthropocentric, and law-breaking, since it abolishes the boundaries between human beings as the bearers of rights and privileges, and animals as the living creatures subjected to death by humans. Duszejko's animal rights praxis thus raises, and leaves unanswered, a series of deeply unsettling questions regarding crime, legality, and the limits of care in human-animal relations.

The novel taking William Blake for its guide, moreover, is expectedly even more complex than that. Blake's "dialectic of contraries" influences the interplay between the many forms of the global and the local in the novel, which ultimately reveals that these specific "contraries" are both mutually constitutive and codependent. Local examples of abuse, in particular, function not only as concrete illustrations of the dangers of blindly following "customs and traditions", but also as localized expressions of the violent global processes targeting the natural world, the nonhuman animals, women, and the elderly and the dispossessed in general. The "customs and traditions", and the populist discourses which increasingly represent "the traditional way of life" as the last bastion against the evils of globalization, are condemned unambiguously in the novel, from the very title. Namely, as opposed to Father Rustle's perspective, Blake's Proverb of Hell, "drive your plow and your cart over the bones of the dead", directs that, in order for life to flourish, tradition should be demolished.

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