



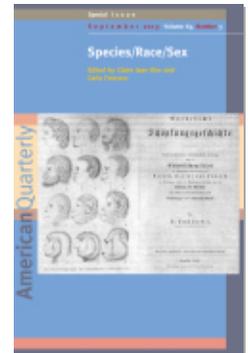
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Ángeles Donoso Macaya, Melissa M. González

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Orthodox Transgressions: The Ideology of Cross-Species, Cross-Class, and Interracial Queerness in Lucía Puenzo's Novel *El niño pez* (*The Fish Child*)

Ángeles Donoso Macaya and Melissa M. González

Her chin trembled a bit when she saw me in the cage. She didn't have eyes for anyone else. Although that bitch of a vet said the one next door had a better snout, she wanted me. She didn't stop talking till we got to the house (she always treated me like an adult). And that same day we sealed our pact: I was supposed to be a present for Sasha, her mother, but I was hers. I peed on her a little, to let her know that I understood. And she got it.

—Lucía Puenzo, *El niño pez*

Nothing can ever rob me of the certainty that what we have here is an existence that refuses to be conceptualized [*rebelle à tout concept*].

—Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*

The two epigraphs above frame the tendencies and limits of one pervasive fantasy that animal studies both seeks to understand and risks replicating: through our cultural texts we frequently fantasize that we know the animal and can speak for the animal, always already refusing the unknowability of the animal that is a seminal concept in the field. *El niño pez* (*The Fish Child*),¹ a 2004 Argentine novel narrated by a dog that claims to transgress the very boundaries between species and subjects that it reinforces, also illustrates some of the central challenges and desires of animal studies, particularly those involved in overcoming humanism, sexism, and racism. On the one hand, putting a Latin American novel in dialogue with American studies seems natural to us as Latin Americanists—after all, in Spanish, *América* refers to the entire hemisphere, and Latin Americanists have long been troubling notions of the border. On the other hand, as Americanists, we realize that the so-called transnational turn has led American studies to consider the inseparability of Latin American and North American cultures in our networked, globally capitalist present, and putting this Argentine novel in dialogue with Anglo-European animal and queer studies demonstrates some of the transnational commonalities and epistemological challenges of speciesism, sexism, and racism.

Best known internationally for her critically acclaimed film about an intersex adolescent, *XXY* (2007), the Argentine writer and filmmaker Lucía Puenzo has produced a growing oeuvre of contemporary novels and films that frequently crosses all manner of generic and social boundaries, between male and female, animal and human, homosexuality and heterosexuality, and between novels and films, as with the novel and film versions of *The Fish Child* and *Wakolda* (in production).² The novel *The Fish Child* tells what could be described as a queer love story that crosses the boundaries between human and animal by virtue of its being narrated by a horny dog and featuring the legend of a fish child who lives in a Paraguayan lake. As told by the rascally mutt with the comically lofty name of Serafín, a wealthy Argentine teenager named Lala is in love with Lin, the adolescent Paraguayan housekeeper who works for and lives in Lala's radically dysfunctional bourgeois home. Lin reciprocates Lala's affection, and together they start planning their escape to the rural town of Ypacaraí, in Paraguay, where they dream of building a house by the lake. Little by little, Lala steals and sells art, jewelry, and other valuables from her parents' house to save up for the escape. Everyone is oblivious to the ongoing theft, and initially the lovers' plan seems foolproof; however, complications arise because every male character desires Lin, who is in turn easily seduced by their desire, prompting Lala's murderous jealousy.

By presenting the readers with a story of same-sex, interclass, and interracial coupling narrated by an eloquent pet dog, *The Fish Child* appears to stage a series of sexual, interspecies, and class transgressions. However, the novel actually stages a central problem of our neoliberal times: simply violating traditional boundaries and hierarchies is not inevitably transgressive of the social order but can actually represent hegemonic ideologies. While there is insufficient space here for a thorough analysis of Puenzo's films on their own terms, it is interesting to consider Zoila Clark's argument that in both *XXY* and the film adaptation of *The Fish Child*, Puenzo approaches gender, race, and class as social constructs that we choose, since we, "the 'humanimals' that we are, [are] capable of choosing from a sea of possibilities our preferred state within nature."³ While Clark celebrates this as an accomplishment, in our view, it is precisely Puenzo's ethic of free choice that ignores the violence and real political consequences involved in the production of minority subject positions. Furthermore, by representing these subject positions as free choices, both the film and Clark's article embrace a rather neoliberal ethic of consumer choice and ignore the complex, interpellative mechanisms through which subjects are formed—topics that have been the subject of decades of poststructuralist inquiry.

Indeed, several features undermine the transgressive potential of the novel's same-sex, cross-class, interracial, and cross-species representations: namely, the novel's normalization of the main characters' lesbian relationship to the point of minimizing the queer experience of difference; its neocolonial romanticization of the indigenous, lower-class protagonist; and the fundamental anthropomorphism that makes the dog narrator little more than a literary device that unproblematically reproduces the male gaze in the novel. Furthermore, the novel's failure to represent the nuances of sexualized and racialized difference is key to its failure to transgress speciesism, emphasizing the similarities of the abjection of the "animalized human" and the "humanized animal."⁴ In part, the melodramatic logic of the novel's plot guides the series of ideological contradictions around questions of cross-species, cross-class, interracial, and same-sex love that, in our view, are at the heart of the novel. Moreover, read alongside debates within the field of animal studies about the human-animal bond that address Donna Haraway's and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's perspectives on "becoming animal," the novel's orthodox brand of transgression gives us insight into the perhaps insurmountable epistemological challenge posed by anthropocentrism as well as some of the pitfalls of positioning the boundary between nonhuman animals and human animals as the final frontier of queer theory.

Although an English translation of the novel by David William Foster recently became available, it has not been as widely disseminated as the significantly different 2009 film adaptation, and given general unfamiliarity with the novel, further summary of its plot is necessary. The novel begins in medias res with the wounded dog narrator remembering the story while, as we later discover, he is fleeing with his two mistresses to Paraguay after they have freed Lin from the sex-trafficking ring she is forced to participate in as an inmate in a minors' prison. Serafín, the dog, remembers the day he came to join the dysfunctional and bourgeois Brontë household and then proceeds to narrate the central love story, giving us insight into the various family members in the process. Brontë, the brooding and enigmatic patriarch, is a renowned writer who spends his time locked in his study and interacts with his family only when the media come to interview him. Sasha, the mother, indulges her new-age interests and runs away with her lover to India early on in the narrative, initiating the family's fall into utter decadence. Pep, the son, is a drug dealer and addict who uses Serafín to test new product and is eventually caught and locked up for dealing, a scandal that only enhances Brontë's mystique as a writer. Finally, Lala, a sullen adolescent with no friends to invite to her birthday party, is in love with Lin (Ailín), the Paraguayan maid who works for Lala's family

and who is always called “la Guayi” (short for “the Paraguayan girl”) by the family and by the dog narrator because of her nationality.

The epithet “la Guayi” also reinforces Lin’s objectified status: nearly every single male character in the novel desires and beds Lin: a local security guard, Lin’s dog trainer friend, and Lala’s father, Brontë. The plot rapidly unfolds after Lala discovers her dad and Lin having sex; emotionally bereft, Lala prepares two glasses of milk, one of them poisoned, and offers one to her father without knowing or caring which it is. After awaking the next morning and discovering she has killed her father instead of herself, she escapes to Paraguay, sure that Lin will show up there. While in Ypacaraí, Lala learns about Lin’s past, about her adolescent pregnancy, and the legend of the fish child—which turns out to be a local myth that grew out of the kernel of truth that Lin drowned the sickly infant she gave birth to as a young teenager. Although the upper-class Lala naively believes that Lin will be able to escape to Paraguay and waits for her there, Lin is charged with the homicide of Lala’s father and with stealing valuables from the family. When Lala discovers that Lin has been detained in a minors’ institute because of her, Lala returns to Buenos Aires dirty and bedraggled after a couple of months in rural Paraguay, no longer looking like a proper girl from her high-class neighborhood. She completes her physical transformation by shaving her head and her eyebrows and leaving her family’s house forever in search of Lin. With the help of Serafin, Lala puts her own life and that of her dog at risk to rescue Lin from the sex-trafficking ring that her jailers force her to participate in, and they kill or wound several of their enemies. The story ends with the couple riding on a bus, along with their injured and probably dying dog, on their way to Paraguay.

The Novel in Its Latin American Literary Context

Twenty-first-century literature in Brazil and the Southern Cone (which consists of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay) has tended to distance itself from the postdictatorial literature of the 1980s and 1990s. As the critic Idelber Avelar notes in *The Untimely Present: Postdictatorial Latin American Fiction and the Task of Mourning*, in the older fictions of the 1980s and 1990s, elements of the past that remain unresolved reemerge: namely, memories of the disappeared and the trauma generated by dictatorship. These postdictatorial narratives mourned the obsolescence of the literary itself in the afterlife of state violence and subsequently sought fragmented narrations, filled with complex language and irregular structures that called attention to the fragmentation of the social through their formal fragmentation.⁵ Unlike these fragmented, experimental

narratives that reflect on social and political realities, much Southern Cone literature in the twenty-first century returns to more traditional, and global, literary forms and genres—such as melodrama, as we see functioning in *The Fish Child*—employing more continuous narrative styles, leaving behind the cuts, jumps, gaps, and temporal breaks that characterize postdictatorial fiction.⁶ Even when literature is neither politically engaged nor directly reflecting on the social, its representations and ideological tendencies can reveal and reflect key cultural values and realities that are both globally and locally oriented. Interestingly, as we shall show, *The Fish Child's* depictions of homosexuality participate in a broader global trend toward normativity; but first we must position the novel vis-à-vis a broader and thriving Latin American queer literary tradition.

David William Foster—one of the first scholars to engage with the Latin American literary canon from the perspective of sexual identities, and still today a leading figure in the study of LGBTQ cultures in Latin America—delineated the contours of this tradition over two decades ago, in 1991.⁷ In 1994 it seemed to Foster more accurate to talk about “gay and lesbian themes” and to refer to a “Latin American homoerotic tradition” (rather than a *queer* tradition), since “to most writers and a good number of the critics, the term [*queer theory*] is meaningless, whether in English or in something like a Spanish or Portuguese translation.”⁸ In Foster’s model, this tradition included not only those writers with “a professed gay identity” such as Manuel Puig or Néstor Perlongher but also “individuals who have written on gay themes, either with negative images . . . or with positive images . . . and . . . an individual who, although not dealing overtly with a gay topic or professing a gay identity, has works in which something like a gay sensibility can be identified, no matter how problematically.”⁹ The latter would apply to Puenzo, who is married to the writer Sergio Bizzio, but who frequently explores nonnormative sexuality and gender in her artistic work. Having much in common with the anti-identitarian precepts of queer theory, Foster’s parameters were crucial in expanding inquiries into sexuality in Latin American literary and cultural studies in the early 1990s.¹⁰ Today, queer theory thrives within Latin America, and in Argentina in particular, where the University of Buenos Aires has had a queer studies research center for over a decade (Área de Estudios Queer). While some Latin American academics and activists, such as Norma Mogrovejo, have argued against the incorporation of Anglo-centric queer theory into Latin American feminist and academic thought as a colonizing imposition from the north, most Latin American academics working in queer studies today cite US academics such as Judith Butler and Lisa Duggan alongside important Latin American cultural producers and public intellectuals such as Perlongher and Severo Sarduy.¹¹

Furthermore, as Foster reminds us, in the case of Argentina, there has been long-standing “important intellectual activity that has served to create, through principled analysis, a reflective discourse regarding homoeroticism.”¹² *The Fish Child* seems, at first glance, to participate in this discourse: the protagonists’ same-sex romance has indeed automatically led the few academic articles that engage with the novel to assume the automatically transgressive nature of the story in the name of queer politics.

Lala’s and Lin’s “Homonormative” Affair

Most readings of *The Fish Child* (both the novel and the film adaptation) take for granted the transgression that, supposedly, is at the core of the argument. For example, one academic review of the film argues:

The Fish Child is a significant challenge to the patriarchal system and to state authority in general. Puenzo uses the love between two women, a highly transgressive thing in and of itself, as a backdrop for the murder of the father who, because of his position of power over them—one of whom is his daughter and the other his employee—represents the dictatorial dominion of the masculine state.¹³

Assen Kokalov interprets the plot as if it were written in the postdictatorial mode, failing to take into account several important features. First, the assimilation of professional, monogamous, white homosexuals into the national imagination has made especially obvious in the twenty-first century the ways that the neoliberal state has dissolved the universality of gayness as transgression. Second, the killing of the patriarch is an act of jealousy that both alludes to the psychoanalytic trope in a melodramatic mode and also undermines political commentary: Lala kills her father because he had sex with her lover and she wishes to assume his subject position. Third, there is scant evidence elsewhere in the novel that supports a reading of an allegorical dimension to the murder of the father, as there would be in postdictatorial fiction. Furthermore, the murder is only one among many depoliticized breakings in the novel that gesture at transgression but can be seen to reify the very conventions they appear at first to defy.

The same-sex love of Lala and Lin tries to defy not only heterosexual norms but also class and race stratifications: Lala comes from a wealthy family in the suburbs of Buenos Aires, and la Guayi is a poor indigenous teenager who emigrates to Argentina—a promised land of sorts—from one of the poorest countries in South America. While Lala’s and Lin’s class differences are perceived as a problematic dimension of their union by other characters in the novel, the

homosexuality of their affair is never commented on—this produces puzzlement in the reader seeking realism, as it does not reflect the reality of either Argentine or transnational attitudes toward homosexuality.¹⁴ Confirming the author’s awareness of this antirealist strategy, Puenzo notes in more than one interview that for the film version of the novel she instructed the actresses to not treat the homosexuality of their characters as an issue because she wanted to tell a story about complex characters without recurring to “stereotypes,” also noting that many more viewers have been scandalized by the class differences of the young couple than by their homosexuality.¹⁵ Puenzo even goes so far as to say, “There would not be much of a difference if instead of being a love story about two women it were about a man and a woman.”¹⁶ Such statements about the sameness of homosexuality, often made with the intention of transgressing social norms by claiming that homosexuals are perfectly normal, are increasingly common across the globe, not just in nations like Argentina that have legalized gay marriage.¹⁷ Nevertheless, such perspectives minimize the queer experience of difference, and the very idea that the lesbian couple might be interchangeable with a heterosexual one effaces the intended transgression and reaffirms some of the norms that create stigma around homosexuality in the first place, a phenomenon that queer theorists have explored at length in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Michael Warner, for example, has explored how discourses that posit homosexuality as normal, particularly the discourse of gay marriage, reify the stigmatization of sex and invalidate less-normative queer relationships and lives.¹⁸ Duggan uses the term *homonormativity* to describe the sexual politics of neoliberalism that ask queers to abandon radical practices and politics so that they may become assimilated, and “virtually normal,” to borrow the title of Andrew Sullivan’s conservative progay treatise.¹⁹ Furthermore, Puenzo’s statement that the two women could be exchanged for one man and one woman without altering the story much is not wholly accurate in the context of the story: while Lala could possibly be replaced with a male character in the novel or film without, arguably, making *much* of a difference (but still a significant difference), the replacement of Lin with a male character is simply inconceivable, given her status as a racialized and gendered object of desire.

Early on, Serafn offers the following interpretation of the most significant difference between Lala and Lin: “Lala’s desire was disoriented before la Guayi arrived, but since then, there had been no room for anyone one else; la Guayi liked everything that looked at her with those eyes, men, women, even her own reflection . . . the other’s desire was hers.”²⁰ Although the final clause above might be interpreted as a nod to a Lacanian reading of the subject and desire,

what precedes it makes very clear the literal dimension of the observation: Lin liked *everything* that might look at her, “todo lo que la mirara” as the original says, not “todos quienes la miraran” (“all [people] who might look at her”). This description of Lin turns her into a mere mirror, an empty vessel that reciprocates the desire of the other without distinguishing between male and female or between thing and person or, it follows, between human and animal. Rather than being transgressive, this blurring of boundaries represents her as a passive, mimetic creature who is not entirely human, a depiction very much in line with the very oldest, animalizing tropes the colonizers created about the indigenous, as when, for example, Christopher Columbus notes in his diaries that the Indians are “tame” creatures with silky hair like a horse’s mane.²¹

The Reality of Paraguayan Domestic Workers in Argentina

While it is common in Latin America to precede a person’s name with an article with mostly affective connotations, the more generic nature of Lin’s nickname—“the Paraguayan”—points at the interchangeability and invisibility of Lin as a Paraguayan maid in the upper-class social context of the Brontë family, especially given the real prevalence of Paraguayan maids in the neighborhood. Immigrant Paraguayan women, who often leave their unfairly compensated domestic jobs in Paraguay in search of more opportunities in Argentina, find themselves years later still working as domestic laborers, facing the same gender and class discrimination as before, but also dealing with the additional stressors of racism and xenophobia. As M. Cristina Alcade points out, “While migrant women’s gender is a significant source of subordination, it is far from the only or perhaps even the most significant identity marker that shapes women’s experiences of violence . . . in the most intimate of spaces, the ascription of Indianness and the amount of education attributed to women . . . are also significant factors in the violence women experience.”²² Norma Sanchís and Corina Rodríguez Enríquez point out that while progressive Argentine laws encourage immigration and seek to protect immigrant rights, the realities of racism and xenophobia drastically reduce access to these rights.²³ Still, Paraguayans represent the largest national group in the immigrant community, a majority of whom are women, and 58.1 percent of whom work in domestic service jobs.²⁴

In the novel, the Brontë family’s neighbors also have an indigenous Paraguayan maid, a realistic allusion to the prevalence of domestic workers from Lin’s country. In fact, in Argentina, having a domestic worker has become a status symbol that separates women into different classes. Speaking specifically

of Paraguayan maids in Argentina, Clyde Soto, Myrian González, and Patricio Dobrée note, “Beneath the appearance of a free exchange are hidden unequal relationships between people who are valued differently: some of these women are to serve, others to be served. For this reason, having access to domestic labor is simultaneously a status symbol.”²⁵ Soto, González, and Dobrée go on to point out the ubiquity of the association of Paraguayan, indigenous, woman and immigrant identities with domestic labor.²⁶ Although reflecting the real prevalence of Paraguayan maids in Argentina, the novel acknowledges the negative consequences of racism in only one area of the plot: the ease with which Lin is falsely accused of the murder of Brontë and incarcerated. Less concerned with the sexual abuse and economic exploitation faced by Paraguayan maids, the novel instead presents Lin as a fascinating, mysterious, unknowable indigenous other who is desired by, and desires, all who come into contact with her. Thus, rather than critique or parody this desire for the racialized other, the novel participates in the romanticization of the indigenous woman.

Becoming Human: The Animal-Inflected Ideology of the Objectification and Romanticization of the Indigenous Other

Nearly every characterization of Lin depicts her as a passive indigenous subject who is also preternaturally in touch with the earth and in awe of literary culture.²⁷ In the memorable dinner scene, when a drunk and besotted Brontë promises to make her a character in his next book, she naively and excitedly believes him, as she has a solemn respect for books, which she is shown respectfully dusting but never reading.²⁸ The narrator notes in this scene that Lin has never been so “obsequious” or so “tame” as when Brontë gives her his full attention, both words charged with connotations that recall the domestication of animals as well as Columbus’s first impressions of the indigenous peoples. Urged by Brontë, Lin sings at the table in Guaraní, her indigenous language, with a voice that is “other, serious, velvety, Indian, it came from the opening of her stomach but seemed to arrive from deeper, from lower down, from the earth, and as it conquered the space, it got heavier, like the interwoven song of all of the birds.”²⁹ This nonironic romanticization of the Indian woman who is in touch with nature to the point that the line between her song and the birds’ is blurred represents no transgression or new insight but rather one more instance of the long history of European animalization of the indigenous other.

Despite scenes like this that animalize and romanticize Lin, the few critics who have written on either the novel or the film have persisted in seeing a transgressive value in the representation of indigeneity. Carina González, for

instance, argues that through the incorporation of Guaraní “the novel proposes a new subjectivity focused on the recovery/re-adoption of an animalistic nature as a way of life that resists domination and as a form of excess capable of transcending the limits of gender, morals and cultural territories marked by politics.”³⁰ González does recognize the ambiguous status of Guaraní throughout the novel—she notes that it can be the language of intimacy, but can also serve to separate and exclude, when, for example, Lin’s grandfather intentionally mistranslates Guaraní for Lala.³¹ Yet González suggests that orality is a form of affirmative resistance in the novel without troubling the fetishizing of the indigenous woman. Likewise, Kokalov argues that the incorporation of the Ypacaraí imaginary, the legend of the fish child, and the Guaraní songs that Lin frequently sings are all “a legitimate presentation of the ways in which marginalized immigrant communities try to rescue elements of their own culture within a foreign milieu that constantly manifests itself as hostile and demeaning towards them and their culture.”³² While it is absolutely true that immigrants preserve their languages and traditions in the face of cultural hegemony, in the uncomfortable dinner scene above, Lin’s voice is quite literally “other.” Her character responds to the Anglo-European demand that indigenous people represent the earth and the past and be “tame” in the face of patriarchal power, barred as they are from modernity and agency. Here the indigenous voice can “conquer” only when it seduces and entertains.

Lest we assume that the animalization of Lin occurs only through the dog narrator’s perspective, her first boyfriend remembers how as a young teenager she used to collect bird and fish eggs and ask him to put them inside her, saying, “Here inside I have space for all. . . . Why should they be orphans?”³³ Represented throughout the novel as an earth mother, Lin blurs the line between animal and human and is shown as mostly powerless over many of the forces that shape her life. Yet an earlier scene alludes to the colonizer’s fantasy that the erotic appeal (for him) of the indigenous woman is tantamount to real power (over him): “And I realized,” narrates the dog as Lin performs a striptease for Lala, “that it was la Guayi who ran all of us. The Brontë family and the world.”³⁴ The dog narrator betrays a decidedly anthropomorphic male gaze in sentences such as these, and its echoing of the oft-heard joke that one’s pet dog is “really in charge of the household” only compounds the irony. Immediately after making this observation, Seraffin directly addresses Lin’s not-quite-human status, asserting that Lin is sometimes neither like “us” the animals nor like “you all” the humans but “something in between.”³⁵ Although this purports to describe Lin’s otherworldly power, neither the sexualized indigenous housekeeper (as the “animalized human”) nor the pampered domestic pet (as “the humanized

animal”) have much real power in the diegetic universe, as both of their lives’ courses are determined by their bourgeois family and the state. While Lala, Brontë, and the police act, both Lin and Serafín react.

Although Lala and Lin are quite different, both of the young lovers have blood on their hands; however, only Lin ever expresses a sense of guilt, confessing at the end the transformative insight she has when Lala says that she was doing her depressed and often suicidal father a favor when she poisoned the milk. At this moment, Lin realizes that she had always been lying to herself when she told herself that she killed her weak infant for his own sake, and she says that admitting that she did it for herself liberates her from the iciness she has carried inside all these years.³⁶ It is for this reason that she accepts her jail sentence as an appropriate punishment, not for Brontë’s murder, but for drowning her child. On the other hand, neither the dog’s narration nor the dialogue he reports give any insight into Lala’s sense of guilt or lack thereof. Furthermore, early on in the novel, Lala appears to have arranged a murder more heinous than the poisoning of the often suicidal Brontë, which could, after all, have ended in her own death, had he chosen the other glass. Serafín reports that Guida, the local security guard, died in a scuffle with some local “hoodlums,” one of whom had met with Lala a few weeks earlier, after Lala had caught Lin and Guida in bed together. The dog remembers the meeting with the local youth clearly because, as he reports, he never forgets anybody who plays fetch with him: “Before we left, she gave him a couple of Sasha’s necklaces, and he gave me the stick [he had been throwing for me]. But who cares about Guida?”³⁷ Really, nobody cares much about Guida or any of the other lost or dead characters. In a curious reversal of the hierarchies of grievability that Judith Butler has explored in *Psychic Life of Power* and *Frames of War* whereby the dehumanized homosexual victims of hate crimes and the Arab casualties of war are ungrievable, here it is only the drowned infant, not the patriarch or working-class man, who can be grieved.³⁸ The eponymous fish child is mourned through the creation of a lie that becomes a legend about a human–animal hybrid; in other words, the shame associated with his birth and death is displaced via its transformation into a story about his dehumanization. Indeed, nearly every character in the novel is subject to some degree of dehumanization, except, of course, Serafín, the dog narrator, who has the most recognizably human emotions of all of them.

Toward the very end of the novel, the dog narrator contradicts the previously made observation about Lin that “the other’s desire was hers,” suggesting that perhaps her animalized human character has changed, and she is becoming human. In a flash-forward from his memory of the escape, Serafín notes that

Lin tells Lala she needed to believe that her forced prostitution in exchange for favors in prison was “fair treatment” in order to stay “on this side of a breaking point that everyday drew closer.”³⁹ However, if the other’s desires were still hers, then sexual abuse would be categorically impossible and the need to believe that it was “fair treatment” to survive it would be inexplicable. Never is Lin so human as when she acknowledges the need to protect herself from the traumatic effects of the violence she is subjected to. Besides this flash-forward, there are four actions in the final chapters that indicate that Lin has been transformed: her donning of her male John’s clothes instead of her black dress; her confession that she drowned her sickly child for her own benefit, not his; her kicking the warden who prostituted her out of the car to an almost-certain death; and the narrator’s final observation that Lala and Lin were “actually strangers. In love with a memory that was only that.”⁴⁰ As long as they are strangers to each other, Lin’s desire can no longer successfully match the other’s, and she appears to have separated from her identification with the other’s desire of her, as her character seems decidedly more human, as well as more assertive and aggressive.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the transformation of Lin’s abject subject position as an animalized human requires the killing of other animalized subjects, in this case the brutish prison guard who treats the minors she oversees like chattel. On the one hand, as Cary Wolfe and Jonathan Elmer point out, informed by Jacques Derrida’s seminal arguments in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, the discourse of animality is crucial not only to the establishment of a human subject but also for how we distinguish between criminal killing (e.g., the murder of a white citizen) and noncriminal killing (e.g., the killing of a racialized other in armed conflict abroad). In other words, those we can kill with impunity tend to be animalized and dehumanized. Likewise, Lin’s near-certain murder of the animalized, brutish prison guard is both noncriminal and affirmative of her newly accomplished humanity within the context of the novel. According to Wolfe and Elmer, the generalized cultural legitimization of the killing of *nonhuman animals* (for food, clothing, testing) is necessary if “the ideological work of marking human others as animals for the purposes of their objectification and sacrifice is to be effective.”⁴¹ In other words, the speciesism that enables us to overlook the violence that produces our leather shoes and meatloaf dinners is wrapped up in the dynamics that enable our subject formation and allows us to tolerate the killing of civilians in Iraq.⁴² Although in an interview Puenzo discusses the challenges of asking the audience to love two such amoral characters as Lin and Lala, another line of thinking would posit that we are always already predisposed to love murderers as long as we perceive their victims as animalized humans.⁴³

While the novel's own version of the species grid is unstable and at times unexpected—given Lin's changing status and the unmourned murder of the patriarch—ultimately, it reverses but never overturns or interrupts traditional hierarchies of humanity and grievability. The mere fact that it is the lesbians committing the murders, and the patriarchs, unwanted children, dogs, and brutish female pimps who die, does not undo the logic of the speciesist system. Lin's recognition of herself as a selfishly motivated criminal (“I did it for me”) and violent act of vengeance represent her becoming human within an entirely human-centric universe, one in which humans are dehumanized and abjected, but also one in which transgressions of animal–human hierarchies do not occur. It is interesting to consider how a novel might invert or complicate this hierarchy or imagine the animal without assigning it human affect and voice, but *The Fish Child* accomplishes none of these. Indeed, its dog narrator is more a cute trick than any transgression of the social order.

Serafin's Macho Fantasies and Anthropocentric Reality

González argues that, through the voice of the narrating dog, Puenzo explores the liminal space in between man and animal, thereby recuperating the repressed animal side of the human. This initial recuperation of the repressed animal side of the human accomplished at the outset of the novel by the dog narrator anticipates the transgressions that personify the characters of Lala and Lin, whom González characterizes as “absolutely free”: “In this animal symbiosis, characters acquire a new agency, one that authorizes the excesses of bare life, closes up the excisions, and advances over the destabilized territories of humanity, social classes, gender, and language.”⁴⁴ Of course, as we have shown, Serafin's decidedly male gaze and the romanticization of Lin as indigenous other argue against the destabilization of these territories in the novel. Nevertheless, González claims that the novel's “aesthetic operation deconstructs the mechanisms of the modern anthropological machine, that, according to Giorgio Agamben, isolates the animality of man in order to imprison him exclusively in his biological life.”⁴⁵ We agree with González when she suggests that “Serafin is . . . the first who exposes men's animal nature as having been relegated by the humanist conception in which modern thought is founded”; however, we would argue, at odds with González's ideas, that paradoxically nothing demonstrates the anthropocentrism of the novel more than the dog narrator, who is both emotionally and sexually attached to his mistress and her lover.⁴⁶ In other words, Serafin neither resists nor transgresses, but rather reproduces the logic of the anthropocentric machine within the narrative.

Going beyond attachment, as Puenzo herself suggests in an interview, the dog also seems to be his mistress's extension: "The dog in the novel brings with him a very cynical humor. He is a dog with no breed in a world of pedigree dogs. It is as if he were an extension of the body of his mistress, it's very provocative."⁴⁷ In other words, the relationship can also be read as less about an affective bond between a human animal and a nonhuman animal than about a projection of the human onto the animal. Perhaps nothing betrays Serafin's anthropomorphic perspective more than his bawdy and cynical sense of humor, which draws heavily from the human, male picaresque literary characters he reminds us of.⁴⁸ Significantly, the mixed-breed dog self-fashions himself this way on the novel's first page: "Just to make sure you understand: I am black, macho, and bad. . . . If I see something moving below the leaves . . . I bite it. Forgive me, I ramble, I know . . . it's not easy if Lala is stroking me like that. And it wouldn't be proper, a dying dog with an erection."⁴⁹ This is not the innocent parent-child relationship we commonly graft onto human-pet relationships, but its brand of sexuality remains caught up in the most traditional, patriarchal gender roles, only with a comic twist. Serafin is not above resorting to trickery to get physical gratification from his mistresses, as he recounts the first time that la Guayi and Lala bathe him: "I faked an escape attempt (they would have suspected if I gave in to a bath without fighting), but really I was completely aroused at the thought of their hands, rubbing me."⁵⁰ This rather hilarious description of the horny dog's machinations works only as a projection of human eroticism onto the animal; the fact that it is a dog undertaking this behavior empties it of its violating power and lets it become funny, but that is about the extent of the difference. The anthropomorphic Serafin assumes a fundamentally male gaze; in fact, he joins the male humans in the house in their lustful male gazing at the lesbian couple:

The fact of the matter is that since that night, something happened to both of them. They had the traces of so many caresses on their skin . . . their eyes charged with secrets. . . . Pep, Brontë and their friends wouldn't stop staring at them. I would hump the pillows in the living room. I would bite them, fuck them, two, three at a time . . . to no avail, something was going on, and we were all uncomfortable. Same thing happened to Brontë: before he would masturbate with a picture of his wife, but now he had no imagination even for that.⁵¹

The "same thing" happens to all the males in the house, not just the outwardly human ones, demonstrating that Serafin's narrated desire for Lala and Lin is an interhuman one.

Buying into the shock value of such scenes that show a dog sexually aroused by his mistresses, one might be tempted to argue that the novel stages a series

of transgressions: Lala, the protagonist, defies her family and transgresses reproductive-hetero-normativity, race, and class stratifications by loving Lin; her dog, in turn, appears to queer the human–animal bond with his desire for his human mistresses. In the end, however, the three main characters—Lala, Lin, and Serafin—reproduce or remain caught up in the same structures they supposedly transgress. Structurally, both Lala’s and Lin’s positions in the narrative reproduce the normative family romance, and the dog’s perspective remains caught up in an anthropocentric frame. We should ask, of course, whether a dog narrating a novel in a human language can ever be *not* anthropomorphic. In her study of two animal narrators brought to life by Virginia Woolf and Paul Auster, Jutta Ittner asks just the right questions: “Are these fictional representations of the animal mind just harmless testimonies to the curiosity and playfulness that the animals’ Otherness evokes in us? Are they reflections of a deep, if unconscious, yearning for contact with the unknowable, or cheap exploitations of our need not to feel separate from the animated universe?”⁵² She concludes that they are both, but that any animal representations are “self-centered” given the real impossibility of accessing the animal perspective. Like the eponymous fish child, Serafin the dog narrator is a lie.

As a human tendency projected onto the dog narrator, the dog’s “male gaze” mediates the logic of desire presented in the novel and is so anthropomorphic that it plainly reproduces the all-too-familiar, human male-oriented voyeuristic desires about lesbian sex. Anthropocentrism is not only a blind spot for critics of the novel, but also in many of the theoretical debates within animal studies, even as its decentering is a foundational idea of the field. As Matthew Calarco notes, the main difficulty faced by animal rights discourse is that it is “constrained to determine animality and animal identity according to anthropocentric norms and ideals.”⁵³ While rethinking our theories of the subject and our theories of sexuality from the perspective of the constitutive human–animal divide is valuable, transgressing that divide is another issue entirely. To queer the human–animal bond, we would need to displace anthropocentrism from our critique. Is this even possible?

“Becoming Animal” or “Becoming With”? Animal Studies’ Anthropocentrism and the Question of Queering

In a 2010 essay in the *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, Carmen Dell’Aversano tries to make a case for queering the human and nonhuman animal bond:

One of the assumptions of queer is that identification and desire can cross the societal boundaries separating sexes, genders and sexual definitions, and that, indeed, these boundaries have been set up largely to tame and to segregate love and empathy, to enforce a conformity of emotion resulting in a conformity of behavior. Up to now, queer studies have neglected one fundamental boundary which is enforced in an even more totalitarian way than any with which queer critique has dealt with so far, but which is nevertheless crossed every day by currents of empathy, fondness and love: the boundary separating humans from animals.⁵⁴

Following Butler's troubling of gender, Dell' Aversano troubles the allegedly natural distinction between humanity and animality, correctly noting that the human–animal boundary has been enforced in a totalitarian fashion. Dell' Aversano encourages us to consider the affective bonds between human and nonhuman animals as an alternative to genital-centric affective relationships between humans. On the other hand, however much we may experience our relationships with our domestic animals as two-way exchanges, it is entirely possible that we may know only the currents of empathy, fondness, and love that cross the human–animal boundary as humans. Dell' Aversano stresses that “queer theory has never confronted a more entrenched and more hegemonic case of naturalization, which not only deproblematizes certain discourses, identities and lifestyles but makes alternative ones not simply dangerous or stigmatized but unthinkable.”⁵⁵ While rethinking subjectivity and indeed reframing whole disciplines by interrogating the essentializing, foundational logic of the human–animal divide is a fruitful endeavor, and queer theory should pay close attention to the human–animal and nonhuman animal boundary it has largely ignored, two caveats are in order. First, the human–animal boundary cannot be analogous to the boundaries between sexes and genders because it is more broadly constitutive of us as human subjects, and second, the possibility of “becoming animal,” as explored by Donna Haraway and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, remains unresolved. Dell' Aversano engages with Haraway's work in only one critical footnote, where she condemns Haraway for her training of agility dogs because it constitutes animal exploitation: “Even though her *Companion Species Manifesto* heavily capitalizes on the transgressive value of the opening image of the author and her dog kissing . . . one would look in vain for instances of more substantial—theoretical—transgression both in the *Manifesto* and in its much more verbose and narcissistic sequel *When Species Meet*.”⁵⁶ But the most urgent question is whether any human writing on the nature of the animal can be nonnarcissistic—in other words, is the transgression of the human–animal divide implied by “becoming animal” (Deleuze and Guattari) and “becoming with” (Haraway) even possible?

In *When Species Meet*, Haraway merges theoretical and scientific discourse with personal reflections and experiences to develop a concept she defines as “becoming with”:

Whom and what do I touch when I touch my dog? . . . Because I become with dogs, I am drawn into the multispecies knots that they are tied into and that they retie by their reciprocal action. My premise is that touch ramifies and shapes accountability. Accountability, caring for, being affected, and entering into responsibility are not ethical abstractions. . . . touch and regard have consequences.⁵⁷

Since the notion of “becoming with” is so fundamental to Haraway’s approach to companion species, she examines Deleuze and Guattari’s “becoming-animal” (as a way to differentiate her approach from theirs). However, Haraway is especially dismayed by how the authors depict domestic pets and their masters:

Little house dogs and the people who love them are the ultimate figure of abjection for Deleuze and Guattari, especially if those people are elderly women. . . . I am not sure I can find in philosophy a clearer display of misogyny, fear of aging, incuriosity about animals . . . here covered by the alibi of an anti-Oedipal and anticapitalist project. . . . It is almost enough to make me go out and get a toy poodle for my next agility dog.⁵⁸

As Dell’ Aversano’s and Haraway’s criticisms tell us, emotions do tend to run high whenever we make a theoretical examination of our deeply personal, affective bonds with animals, but this only tells us about our end of things, not the animals’. Neither Dell’ Aversano nor Haraway resolves the question that would seem, judging from their own criticisms, to be the most pressing and the most vexing: how might we engage with animals in a genuinely animal-centric way?

Perhaps a more precise version of this question is less how to engage with animals in a genuinely animal-centric way than, as Deleuze puts it in *From A to Z*, how might we have “an animal relation with an animal.” In this series of conversations between Deleuze and Claire Parnet, organized according to the alphabet, Deleuze begins with the question of the animal in the section “A as in Animal.” In this conversation, Deleuze asks, “So the question is, what kind of relationship do you have with an animal? If you have a human relationship with an animal—but again, generally people who like animals don’t have a human relationship with animals, they have an animal relationship with the animal, and that’s quite beautiful. Even hunters—and I don’t like hunters—but even hunters have an astonishing relationship with the animal.”⁵⁹ In other words, the hunter acts as any animal predator would act—or, to put in Deleuzian terms, he *becomes* a predator—smelling and tracking like an animal,

and therefore has an animal relationship with the animal. Despite Haraway's criticisms of Deleuze and Guattari, their notion of becoming animal makes the most progress in answering the question of how to have an animal relationship, and actually has much in common with Haraway's own.

When Parnet asks Deleuze what difference there might be between the repugnant and insignificant animals that he makes frequent reference to in his writing, such as ticks and rats, and those domesticated animals that the philosopher appears to disdain, Deleuze responds, "It's not really domestic, or tamed, or wild animals that concern me, or cats or dogs. . . . The problem, rather, is with animals that are both familiar and familial."⁶⁰ Similarly, his criticism of psychoanalysis centers on how it translates and reduces everything to the realm of the familiar:

I can't stand the human relationship with the animal. I know what I am saying because I live on a rather deserted street, where people walk with their dogs, and what I hear from my window is quite frightening, the way that people talk to their animals. Even psychoanalysis notices this! Psychoanalysis is so fixated on familiar or familial animals, on animals of the family, that any animal, in a dream, for example, is interpreted by psychoanalysis as being an image of the father, mother, or child, that is, an animal as a family member.⁶¹

Deleuze here explains his dislike of the relationship between domestic pets and the people who love them, pointing out how caught up it is in an anthropocentric, psychoanalytic framework. On the one hand, it becomes clear here that domestic pets are sometimes the "ultimate figure of abjection" for Deleuze, but only because of how we project ourselves and our human family relationships onto them. Like Haraway, Deleuze wants to find a new way to relate to the animal; unlike Haraway, he does not consider it to be frequently accomplished in domestic pet relationships. Instead, Deleuze confesses to Parnet that what impresses him about animals is "the fact that every animal has a world, and it's curious because there are a lot of humans, a lot of people who do not have a world. They live the life of everybody, that is, of just any one and any thing. Animals, they have worlds. What is an animal world? It's sometimes extraordinarily limited, and that's what moves me."⁶² This world can sometimes consist of no more than two of three affects—as it happens with the tick that reacts exclusively to light, smell, and touch—but can sometimes be more complex.

Yet Serafin's world is not the dog world theorized by animal behaviorists but the all-too-human world of melodrama: a world of desire, sex, passions, jealousies, and patricide. Instead of assuming that literary devices like a dog narrator are transgressively animal-centric, as many critics do, we need to

imagine new ways to respond to the epistemological challenge of our anthropocentrism, or we are doomed to reinforce the hegemony of humanism and its psychoanalytic frameworks.

Even though *The Fish Child* does not queer the human–animal divide by representing the attempt at an animal relationship with the animal, the oedipal “triangle” formed by Lala, Lin, and Serafín that is at the center of the novel does stage issues concerning sex, race, and species, in such a way that the notion of becoming-animal acquires special relevance. Deleuze and Guattari contend—in the analysis that rankles Haraway—that some animals are “Oedipal animals with which one can ‘play Oedipus,’ play family, my little dog, my little cat, and then other animals that by contrast draw us into an irresistible becoming”; but they also argue that “the same animal can be taken up by two opposing functions and movements, depending on the case,”⁶³ and the animal is not limited to an oedipal role. For Deleuze and Guattari, becoming results from an encounter, but it does not proceed through identification: “Becoming is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something; neither is it regressing-progressing; neither it is corresponding, establishing corresponding relationships; neither is it producing, producing a filiation or producing through filiation. . . . Becoming is a verb with consistency all its own; it does not lead back to ‘appearing,’ ‘being,’ ‘equaling,’ or ‘producing.’”⁶⁴ To delve into the mystery of becoming-animal, we need more narratives that imagine it head-on, but *The Fish Child* is not one of them.

On the contrary, the relationship between Lala and Lin could be read as a twenty-first-century reimagining of the nineteenth-century foundational family fiction described by Doris Sommer. She uses the term *foundational fictions* to describe a corpus of nineteenth-century romantic, melodramatic novels that disseminated dominant ideologies about class, race miscegenation, and politics in the early stages of the formation and consolidation of the Latin American nation-states. While in some foundational fictions “race relations are tragic,” in others interracial love brings about the promise of national regeneration; in either case, however, they support racist national ideologies.⁶⁵ In the case of *The Fish Child*, the rich white girl and the poor indigenous girl dream of escaping civilization together and building a house by the lake—they even have their puppy dog, and the family romance is complete. Rather than transgress mainstream ideology, they fulfill it about as thoroughly as the heterosexual couples of the nation-consolidating foundational fictions. At the outset, the novel deploys two possibilities: in one, the characters transgress heteronormativity and class and race stratifications with their same-sex love; in the other, these same characters function inside the structure of melodramatic family

romance. Only the latter possibility is fulfilled, as Lala, Lin, and Serafín remain caught up in the family romance. At the end Serafín is sacrificed so that the lesbian relationship of Lala and la Guayi can thrive, a sacrifice that hints at how contemporary Argentine homonationalism permits the incorporation of lesbian relationships, even interracial ones, into the national imaginary, but suppresses queerer possibilities. Ultimately, the novel introduces but forecloses the potential of becoming animal, of an interspecies queer relationship, and Serafín, the oedipal puppy, must die, in a modern rewriting of the trope in which queer love inevitably leads to violence and death.

Notes

1. Because this coauthored article is the fruit of our collaborative thinking, writing, and editing, we have chosen to list our names alphabetically. We have included our own, literal translations of the novel to best reflect our own reading of the original text. We have also translated some critical sources from Spanish to English to make them accessible to *American Quarterly* readers.
2. *XXY*, Puenzo's first feature film, won the 2007 Cannes Critic's Week Grand Prize and was Argentina's entry for the best foreign-film Oscar. Puenzo's film adaptation of *The Fish Child* (2009)—which she wrote, directed, and produced—was rather less successful, received mixed reviews, and won a couple of less-prestigious awards. Besides Carina González's recent "Migración y oralidad: La vida animal en la novela *El niño Pez* de Lucía Puenzo" ("Migration and Orality: Animal Life in the Novel *El niño Pez* by Lucía Puenzo"), all related academic articles and reviews focus primarily on the film adaptation of *The Fish Child*, with limited discussion of the novel, whose dog narrator was removed for the film adaptation. Given the erasure of the dog narrator and various other significant changes in the film version, we have chosen to focus mainly on the novel, which inspired our argument in the first place.
3. Zoila Clark, "Our Monstrous Humanimality in Lucía Puenzo's *XXY* and *The Fish Child*," *Hispanet Journal* 5 (2012), www.hispanetjournal.com/OurMonstrousHumanimality.pdf.
4. We borrow the terms *animalized human* and *humanized animal* from Cary Wolfe and Jonathan Elmer's incisive analysis of *The Silence of the Lambs*, in which they discuss a hierarchical "species grid" whose other points are the "animalized animal" and the "humanized human" ("Subject to Sacrifice: Ideology, Psychoanalysis, and the Poverty of Humanism," in *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*, ed. Cary Wolfe [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003], 101–2).
5. Emblematic novels of the time include Ricardo Piglia's *Respiración artificial* (*Artificial Respiration*) (1980) and *La ciudad ausente* (*The Absent City*) (1990) as well as Diamela Eltit's *Lumpérica* (1986), whose title is a neologism that combines the Spanish words for "America" and "lumpen."
6. This trend is not absolute: a strain of twenty-first-century Argentine literature remains engaged with the postdictatorial mode. For example, recent novels by Félix Bruzzone, Martín Kohan, Alan Pauls, and Pola Oloixarac not only reflect directly on Argentina's political past since the 1970s but also occasionally employ complex and fragmented narrative structures. In *Aquí América Latina: Una Especulación*, the critic Josefina Ludmer notes contemporary Argentine literature's at-times obsessive focus on post-1970s national history. *The Fish Child*, of course, participates in the strain of contemporary Argentine literature that harks back to predictatorial narrative styles while also representing the popular and media culture of the globalized present.
7. Foster published *Gay and Lesbian Themes in Latin American Writing* as early as 1991, *Latin American Writers on Gay and Lesbian Themes: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook* in 1994, and *Sexual Textualities: Essays on Queering Latin American Writing* in 1997.

8. David William Foster, *Latin American Writers on Gay and Lesbian Themes: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1994), xii–xiii.
9. *Ibid.*, x–xi. Manuel Puig (1932–1990) gained international recognition for his novels, especially *El beso de la mujer araña* (*The Kiss of the Spider Woman*) (1976), which was made into film and later adapted into a Broadway musical (1993). Néstor Perlongher (1949–1992) was the founder of the “neo-barroso” style (using a play on the Spanish word for “neo-baroque”), and today he is most well-known as a queer poet and foundational queer activist for his work with the Frente de Liberación Homosexual (Homosexual Liberation Front) (David William Foster, “Argentine Intellectuals and Homoeroticism: Néstor Perlongher and Juan José Sebreli,” *Hispania* 84.3 [2001]: 445).
10. For a more recent panorama on related scholarship and topics, see Ignacio López-Vicuña’s 2004 review essay: “Approaches to Sexuality in Latin America: Recent Scholarship on Gay and Lesbian Studies,” *Latin American Research Review* 39.1 (2004): 238–53.
11. José Javier Maristany, citing Christian Gunderman, reminds us that writers like Sarduy anticipated queer theory in the 1970s with their antinormative ideologies and aesthetics; furthermore, he suggests that an alternative genealogy of queer theory in Latin America might be traceable via the early popularity of Deleuze and Guattari and French poststructuralism in the region (“¿Una teoría queer latinoamericana? Postestructuralismo y políticas de la identidad en Lemebel,” *Lectures du genre* 4 [2008]: 17, www.lecturesdugenre.fr/Lectures_du_genre_4/Maristany.html).
12. Foster, “Argentine Intellectuals,” 442. The critic points “to important writers like Manuel Puig (the only one to have gained international attention), Alejandra Pizarnik (who is now receiving considerable critical attention for the lesbian elements of her work), Oscar Hermes Villordo, Juan María Borghello, Juan José Hernández, Héctor Lastra, Renato Pellegrini, Manuel Mujica Lainez, Reina Roffó, to name only a few. Films like Enrique Dawi’s *Adiós, Roberto* (1985) and America Ortiz de Zárate’s *Otra historia de amor* (1986), along with those of María Luisa Bemberg (*La señora de nadie* [1982], *Yo, la peor de todas* [1990], *De eso no se habla* [1993]), provide an impressive list where one can begin to examine a cultural record of issues of same-sex identity and the repudiation of compulsory heterosexuality in Argentina” (442).
13. Assen Kokalov, review of *El niño pez* by Lucía Puenzo, *Chasqui* 38.1 (2009): 228. Brontë, the father in the novel, is transformed from a writer into a judge in the film version. Although Kokalov’s reading makes a bit more sense when it involves the killing of a judge who represents state power, it does not easily apply to the novel.
14. In 1996 the city of Buenos Aires adopted a new constitution. Article 11 recognized and granted the right to be different, forbidding any kind of discrimination that could lead to segregation on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, ideology, opinion, nationality, physical traits, psychophysical conditions, social or economic circumstances, or any other circumstance. Yet, as Foster points out, such legal changes can hardly transform long-standing behaviors and practices: “Such a guarantee can hardly begin to scratch the surface of a long history of homophobia in Argentina and, more to the point, of a long history of police persecution: police edicts regarding public decency still remain in effect, and public displays (including on occasion activities in the semiprivate space of bars and clubs) of homoerotic manifestation and affection continue to be more than sporadically harassed” (“Argentine Intellectuals,” 441).
15. Juan Sardá, “Lucía Puenzo: ‘Hay gente que se ha escandalizado por la distinta procedencia social de las dos chicas, más que por su homosexualidad,’ *El Cultural.es*, April 24, 2009, www.elcultural.es/noticias/CINE/504250/Lucia_Puenzo-_Hay_gente_que_se_ha_escandalizado_por_la_distinta_procedencia_social_de_las_dos_chicas_mas_que_por_su_homosexualidad.
16. *Ibid.*
17. President Cristina Fernández signed the bill legalizing same-sex marriage in Argentina on July 21, 2010. In relation to this “new homonormativity,” one cannot fail to mention the increasing visibility of gay and lesbian themes within mainstream media. For instance, the widely watched Argentine soap opera *Botíneras*, which aired on the TELEFE network from November 2009 until August 2010 and revolved around the life of soccer players’ wives, depicted a gay relationship between two members of the soccer team; this is especially striking considering that soccer is the most popular and *machista* sport in Argentina. Another *telenovela* from 2010, *Para vestir Santos* (2010), airing on Canal 13, depicted a relationship between two lesbians.
18. Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: Free Press, 1999).

19. Lisa Duggan, "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Liberation," in *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, ed. Russ Castronovo and Dana D. Nelson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 176, 189.
20. Lucía Puenzo, *El niño pez* (Buenos Aires: Beatriz Viterbo, 2004), 123.
21. Cristóbal Colón and Bartolomé de las Casas, *Los cuatro viajes del Almirante y su testamento* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1964), 31, 58.
22. M. Cristina Alcade, "'Why Would You Marry a Serrana?' Women's Experience of Identity-Based Violence in the Intimacy of the Homes in Lima," *JLACA: The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 12.1 (2007): 2. Rebeca Raijman, Silvina Schammah-Gesser, and Adriana Kemp point out that across the globe "migrant women suffer from a double disadvantage. Since domestic work is the only occupational niche available for them, women have to endure a work setting that is small, is unregulated, and involves patriarchal and vertical ties with the employer" ("International Migration, Domestic Work, and Care Work: Undocumented Latina Migrants in Israel," *Gender and Society* 17.5 [2003]: 730).
23. Norma Sanchís and Corina Rodríguez Enríquez, *Cadenas globales de cuidados: El papel de las migrantes paraguayas en la provisión de cuidados en Argentina* (Santo Domingo, DR: UN Women, 2011), 53.
24. *Ibid.*, 46.
25. Clyde Soto, Myrián González, and Patricio Dobrée, *La migración femenina paraguaya en las cadenas globales de cuidados en Argentina: Transferencia de cuidados y desigualdades de género* (Santo Domingo, DR: UN Women, 2012), 34.
26. *Ibid.*, 35.
27. González, for example, reads the many clichés and stereotypes embodied by the characters in the novel as a sort of meta-reflexive strategy. She notes that the characters' "stereotypical attitudes follow the norms of pop culture mediated by pulp fiction, film noir, melodrama, and action series. This sort of cliché . . . [intends] to serve as a realist background, adulterated already by the fictional realm of media, on which a new rupture is imprinted, i.e., the entering of the indigenous world, the oral language, and the animal speech" ("Migración y oralidad," 198). Yet one of our points is precisely that the representations of the indigenous other (Lin), the indigenous language (Guaraní), and what González calls "animal speech" (an oxymoron in itself) are also stereotyped in the novel. In other words, neither Lin's "indigenous world" nor Serafin's "animal speech" represent an irruption of anything "real" into a stereotyped space because both elements are already stereotyped.
28. Puenzo, *El niño pez*, 118.
29. *Ibid.*, 119.
30. González, "Migración y oralidad," 193.
31. Puenzo, *El niño pez*, 210.
32. Kokalov, review of *El niño pez*, 230. Even though Puenzo's intention was to cast a Paraguayan actress for the role of Lin, ironically, she ended up casting a well-known Argentine singer (Mariela Vitale) for the film version, who had to learn the songs phonetically because she does not speak Guaraní.
33. Puenzo, *El niño pez*, 50.
34. *Ibid.*, 20.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*, 163.
37. *Ibid.*, 16.
38. Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), 46.
39. Puenzo, *El niño pez*, 146.
40. *Ibid.*, 169.
41. Wolfe and Elmer, "Subject to Sacrifice," 101.
42. Colleen Glenney Boggs very intelligently expresses the consequences of Wolfe and Elmer's "species grid" in her insightful article about "American bestiality" and the various animalizations that occurred at Abu Ghraib: "Although the humanized human negates the importance of the animalized animal, that negation establishes his identity" ("American Bestiality: Sex, Animals, and the Construction of Subjectivity," *Cultural Critique* 76 [Fall 2010]: 113). While pointing out that human and animal identities are dependent on one another, Boggs paraphrases the species grid that produces four distinct subject positions: the humanized human, the animalized animal, the animalized human, and the humanized animal (113). In this system, any brutality of the humanized human directed against the brute (or animalized animal) and the animalized human is perfectly justified.

43. Oscar Ranzani, interview with Lucía Puenzo, “Los dos personajes son muy amorales,” *Página12*, February 6, 2009, www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/espectaculos/2-12776-2009-02-06.html.
44. González, “Migración y oralidad,” 203.
45. *Ibid.*, 199.
46. *Ibid.*, 200–201.
47. Ranzani, interview with Lucía Puenzo. It is unclear whether Puenzo, in her use of the word *cynic*, means to allude to its etymology: the original Greek term means “doglike” and was applied to followers of certain schools of philosophy.
48. Indeed, it is likely that Puenzo has in mind one of Cervantes’s *novelas ejemplares*, *El coloquio de los perros* (*The Dialogue of the Dogs*), which is widely read in Spanish-speaking schools, as an intertext. Cervantes’s speaking dogs also draw on the picaresque tradition.
49. Puenzo, *El niño pez*, 9.
50. *Ibid.*, 18.
51. *Ibid.*, 16–17.
52. Jutta Ittner, “Part Spaniel, Part Canine Puzzle: Anthropomorphism in Woolf’s *Flush* and Auster’s *Timbuktu*,” *Mosaic* 39.4 (2006): 181.
53. Matthew Calarco, *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 8.
54. Carmen Dell’Aversano, “The Love Whose Name Cannot Be Spoken: Queering the Human-Animal Bond,” *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* 8.1–2 (2010): 81.
55. *Ibid.*, 79–80.
56. *Ibid.*, 116.
57. Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 35–36.
58. *Ibid.*, 30.
59. *Gilles Deleuze from A to Z*, 3 DVDs (dir. Pierre-André Boutang, 1988–89; Paris: Sub-til and Sodeparaga/Semiotext(e), 2012), DVD 1.
60. *Ibid.*
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid.*
63. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 233.
64. *Ibid.*, 239.
65. Doris Sommer, “For Love and Money: Of Potboilers and Precautions,” *PMLA* 116.2 (2001): 382. Sommer argues, “As a rhetorical solution to the crises in these novels (and nations), miscegenation is often the figure for subsuming the primitive or barbarous sector in color-coded flirtations between Creole liberals and Creole conservatives” (383).