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*Published in:*  
Organization

*DOI:*  
[10.1177/1350508420961533](https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508420961533)

Published: 13/10/2020

*Document Version*  
(Peer reviewed version when applicable)

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[Link to publication](#)

*Please cite the original version:*  
Huopalainen, A. (2020). Writing with the bitches. *Organization*, –. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508420961533>

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## Writing with the bitches

### Abstract

Could the everyday affective relationships that we share with our animal companions inspire us to think, write and even care differently in the field of organization studies? This paper delves into the post-humanist realm of feminist dog-writing and experiments with ‘writing with the bitches’. Drawing on selected foundational texts on posthumanism, post-qualitative methodology and feminist dog-writing, I here seek to openly wonder what the practice of feminist dog-writing could involve, in concrete terms. Moreover, what could this kind of writing ‘differently’ – in ways where the entangled becoming of humanimal is highlighted in its multiplicity – potentially *do* in our scholarly field, more broadly? By writing through entanglements with female canine companions in embedded affective relationships, I attempt to provoke human/animal binaries and confuse the human-centered, masculinist and disembodied conventions around more ‘conventional’ scholarly writing. In the making of my beloved animal companions more visible and hopefully also more agentic through writing, I simultaneously enter a territory of moral ambiguity, embodied struggle and potential shame, where my gendered animal-writing risks being ridiculed and degraded by others. Despite the limitations of anthropocentric language, I argue that feminist dog-writing has the capability to creatively confuse and transform our writing, as well as invite us humans to more empathetically engage with the more-than-human life worlds that human-centered accounts of organizational life have typically excluded.

**Key words:** *feminist dog-writing, feminine writing, humanimal assemblage, bitching, post-humanism, critique*

## Beginning with bitches

Bitch. [/bitʃ/] [a female dog, wolf, fox or otter.] [A spiteful or unpleasant woman.]

Means of misogyny, humiliation and denigration –

*Not* a desired subject position.

Different species locked into systems of ‘othering’.

Bitches and ‘bossy’ women – female forms too difficult to handle?

Complaint. Critique. Disruption.

Who is the subject?! The *subjectobject*? Whose bodies or writings are heard?

Power and politics, intersecting.

Affectual humanimal ‘becomings’ in multiplicity for transformation?

Can we write in ways that confuse or seek to go beyond our visible and intentional actions?

Language marks a key difference between humans and other species, and our academic texts have traditionally built upon an ideal of human superiority, exclusivity and mastery in the world. Could we as academics write, then, to disrupt these assumptions and the rigid norms around ‘conventional’, *human*-centered academic writing – the kind of dry, disembodied, sterile, cleaned-up, masculinist writing that confirms to a patriarchal discourse (Höpfl, 2000), upholds binaries, and firmly believes in human certainty and superiority in the world (for a critique, see e.g. Fotaki and Harding, 2018; Höpfl, 2000; Pullen and Rhodes, 2008)? How could we create alternative, vulnerable, affective, transformative and perhaps also more liberatory openings to the field of organization studies? Could (companion) animals and relating to the various animal ‘others’ around us inspire us human writers to think, write and possibly even care differently in our scholarly field? If so, what could the post-humanist writing of interspecies encounters and co-constitutions, affective struggles, humanimal becomings, as

well as the chucker, chatter, furs, paws, woofs, barks, purrs, clucks, grunts, neighs and roars of organizational life enable us to see, feel or understand differently in our scholarly field?

Animality is a feature shared between humans and other living creatures (Birke, 2012; Baker, 2019). Although human animals are not the only source of sensation, knowledge and embodied perception in the world, anthropocentric masculinist values continue to dominate our academic thinking and writing practices (for a critique, see e.g. Phillips, Pullen and Rhodes, 2014; Fotaki and Harding, 2018; Gherardi, 2018). Non-human animals –framed either individually, sentimentally or as a grey mass with a collective identity– remain the strangely familiar yet unknown, uncanny and wild ‘others’ haunting in the shadows of organizational life. After all, animal ‘others’ are the ones against which ‘civilized humanity’ (sic) continuously measures itself (Baker, 2019). As organizational scholars, then, we have tended to uphold human/animal dichotomies through written and spoken language. We have largely ignored non-human animals in our scholarly debates, and it is not until relatively recently that organizational researchers have begun to more carefully acknowledge how various animals actively participate in organizational life (Clarke and Knights, 2018; Labatut et al., 2016; Sage et al., 2016; Sayers, 2016, 2017; Hamilton and Taylor, 2012, 2013, 2017; Skoglund and Redmalm, 2017; O’Doherty, 2016; Satama and Huopainen, 2018; e Cunha et al., 2018).

Meanwhile, the existing approaches to human-animal relations (or here, ‘humanimal’ to reflect a post-humanist commitment and entangled worldview) in our scholarly field render visible rather different onto-epistemological traditions or theorizations of ‘the animal’. Some studies seem keen to reproduce the human-animal dichotomy, privilege the human at the expense of lived animal experiences and merely give scant attention to the agency of sensate non-humans (e Cunha et al., 2018). Other studies, then, build on post-qualitative, new materialist, feminist and post-human traditions that seek to decenter the human subject or rethink agency in these

entangled relations, highlight the intra-actions and non-oppositional connections of different bodies and materialities – the multispecies assemblages (Haraway, 2008) – as well as disturb the taken-for-grantedness of the human/animal dualism (e.g. Hamilton and Taylor, 2017; Sayers, 2016, 2017; Satama and Huopalainen, 2018; Staunæs and Raffnsøe, 2018).

Echoing a philosophical, theoretical and empirical interest in the latter, post-humanist tradition that emphasizes our everyday entanglements with animal life worlds in a more-than-human world, I here seek to think and write through entanglements with flesh-and-blood bitches – female canine companions – in order to more thoroughly – and concretely – engage with posthumanist thinking, writing and caring (Gherardi and Rodeschini, 2016) in the field of organization studies. Doing so requires an urge or willingness to write ‘differently’ and vividly, in rich nuances, while searching for creative alternatives to the ordinary privileging of *distanced*, rigid and linear human writing. In this paper, my animal-writing involves Labrador retrievers Saga and Selma, non-human subjects with agency (Tito, 2008). Our shared affective human-canine relations and everyday interspecies practicalities matter and inform my doing, writing and moving around in the world. Negotiated in the mundane rhythms of our sensory more-than-human life (Stewart, 2007), these everyday human-animal (humanimal) relations fundamentally affect and ‘spill over’ to my scholarly work and writing.

As a daily and almost taken-for-granted practice, our academic writing continuously deserves to be ‘explored, investigated, and questioned’ (Cloutier, 2016: 69). For long, especially feminist scholars have pointed towards the vulnerable, liberatory and affective possibilities of writing differently (Beavan, 2018 Fotaki and Harding, 2018; Huopalainen and Satama, 2019; Pullen, 2018; Weatherall, 2019) as a political practice, and striving to break free of the simplistic dichotomies between subject/object, human/animal, mind/body, agency/structure that more conventional masculinist academic writing tends to (re)produce. Whereas doing so remains

ever so difficult in practice, a willingness to problematize ‘an ideology of anthroparchy’ (Clarke and Knights, 2018: 16), put my vulnerable humanimal self ‘out there’ and sense the world somewhat ‘differently’, have guided me in the struggles of crafting this paper.

‘Choosing animals to write with might be seen as perverse’, Sayers (2017: 167) aptly reminds us. Indeed, bitch writing (McHugh, 2012), bird writing (Sayers, 2017) or meat-writing (Sayers, 2016), remain potentially awkward, marginalized and seemingly difficult practices in our field. Whereas some of us regard animals as fundamental to live, think and write with, powerful gendered stereotypes advocate that there is something ‘strange, perverse or wasteful’ about displaying affection for animals (Serpell, 1996: xiv). ‘Dog-writing?!’, you sigh, pause and glance at me with suspicion. Awkward silence. Does not dog-writing undermine one’s seriousness as an academic? You are clearly not convinced, as you are probably not too enthusiastic about feminism either. Does the pairing of feminist *and* dog-writing make you utterly provoked, confused or uncomfortable in your (male?) body? As you read these lines, do you shake your head or raise your eyebrows thinking ‘Oh dear’. OH DEAR. Indeed, post-qualitative dog-writing sounds disturbingly (yet refreshingly!) queer and ill-fitting in the neoliberal Business School where the pressures to do more accountable, mainstream and quantitative research have only increased lately (Kallio et al., 2016; Kiriakos and Tienari, 2018; Parker, 2014). As an alternative practice, feminist dog-writing thus raises important ethical questions about the burdens of humanism, the limitations/possibilities of human language, the gendered power relations that continuously shape our scholarly practices, the politics of research as well as what is considered acceptable (or *not*) to address in our community. By provoking, queering and raising intersectional questions across species, feminist dog-writing performs an important, intriguing and timely scholarly practice for the field of organization studies.

This paper is structured as follows. First, I present the theoretical framework that has informed this paper, including work on post-humanism, humanimal relations and canine-human relations. Second, I delve into feminist dog-writing from a post-qualitative methodological point of view, seeking to outline what it could involve, in concrete terms. Third, I seek to practice what I preach by ‘demonstrating’ feminist dog-writing or providing empirical illustrations of this kind of writing ‘differently’ that seeks to confuse masculinist and anthropocentric writing in the field of organization studies. Finally, I discuss what feminist dog-writing could possibly do or ‘offer’ (sic) to the field of organization studies, more broadly.

### **Relating to animal ‘others’**

‘[w]e need to move beyond anthropocentrism altogether, rather than to extend humanism to the formerly exploited others’ (Braidotti, 2006, 107)

As human organisms, we depend on others and the diversity of the entire biosphere. As hinted by Braidotti (2006) above, this paper has been informed by post-humanist and post-qualitative theorizing that, broadly speaking, seeks to critique the human-centeredness of organization studies by offering alternatives to an arguably anthropocentric field. Specifically, curiosities regarding post-qualitative methodology (e.g. Gherardi, 2018; St. Pierre, 1997; St. Pierre, 2014) and post-humanist thinking (Haraway, 2003, 2008; Clarke and Knights, 2018; Sayers, 2016, 2017) led me – an animal advocate, early career researcher and dog owner – to openly delve into and eventually get lost in the many intriguing post-humanist debates, think further about difficult ethical issues, as well as compassionately engage with the vivid, intriguing and multi-species realm of animal-writing.

As a broad and varied philosophical -ism, post-humanism carries diverse and varied meanings (Clarke and Knights, 2018). By posthumanism, I here understand a deconstruction of the

discursive, material and symbolic arrangements that reproduce the notion of the ‘human’ as a distinctly unique, rational and superior (masculinist) character at the very center of the organized world (Pedersen, 2011). Spanning perspectives such as new materialism, STS, cultural studies and animal studies, among others, posthumanism covers varied theoretical perspectives that seek to question human exceptionalism and critique disembodied, masculinist and anthropocentric superiorities and rationalities (e.g. Braidotti, 2002, 2006, 2013; Haraway, 2008; Clarke and Knights, 2018). Furthermore, these philosophical perspectives often focus on dismantling dichotomies by highlighting the intra-actions, entanglements and interdependencies of different elements, affects, agencies and materialities in the moving world (Barad, 2003, 2007). By so doing, posthumanist approaches challenge us to rethink simplistic oppositions including the species division, the stability and anthropomorphism of linguistic representation (Baker, 2019), as well as the reproduction of dominant power relations.

What it is like to be dominated or ‘Othered’ (Sayers, 2017)? In terms of onto-epistemological positioning, posthumanist approaches suggest that non-human animals present an ethical challenge to the anthropocentrism, disembodiment and what I’d like to call the dominant ‘ratio-masculinism’ of organizational life. As human subjects, we inevitably act, move, experience and *become with* in co-existence with the various non-humans (e.g. Latour, 2005), other-than-humans and more-than-humans (Braidotti, 2006) around us. We think and breathe in entanglements with others. To Schuurman and Leinonen (2012), *all* human-animal relationships include embodied, ethical and moral dimensions. Our leaking, sensing and moving hairy bodies are bodies multiple (Mol, 2003): complicated ecosystems of billions of microbes, hormones, skin, bones, organs. Our living spaces and workplaces are, likewise, already inhabited by multiple other living beings. In this paper, I approach the animal as a varied, slippery, and seemingly difficult concept to define (see also Birke, 1994, 2012). If ‘anthropocentric hierarchical relations’ (Clarke et al., 2018) have traditionally defined how



human animals approach other animals in the world, humans have largely objectified animal others for exploitative, capitalist or ‘productive’ purposes (e.g. Schwartz, 2018). In contrast to animals treated merely as production factors, things or commodities to be exploited (Schwartz, 2018), some animals – like canine companions – have in some cases become loyal and close friends, compassionately cared for. Of course, this does not apply everywhere in the world. Throughout history, however, humans have tended to act in a dominant position of power in relation to other animal(s), and power dynamics continue to shape these relations.

As sentient beings with agency, intellect, instincts and emotions, animals do shape, construct and organize our more-than-human world. To me, interspecies relations are embedded in embodied relations of ethics and care (Pullen and Rhodes, 2015) that should not be exchanged with the onto-epistemologically rather different, essentialist ethics of care framework (e.g. Gilligan, 1982, 1993). Talking about ethics, humans seem largely fascinated by animals that embody identifiable ‘human’ characteristics and/or human personhood: we actively craft emotional intimacy and proximity (Hamilton and Taylor, 2013) towards certain domesticated, bred and “enchanted” animals, such as dogs, cats and horses. These animals have received plenty of scholarly (Haraway, 2003, 2008) and popular attention (e.g. Knapp, 1998; Kuzniar, 2006), which resonates with Milton’s (2002) findings: humans craft connectedness to animals with identifiable facial expressions and corporeal bodies. By attuning towards certain animals, we simultaneously overlook, marginalize and violate others. In fact, how can we approach other species ethically? Valtonen (2017: 79) suggests that ‘the academic narratives of animals replicate the popular cultural storytelling: those furry, cute, large or tiny animals with big eyes that we encounter in Disney stories are the ones we meet in academic studies as well’<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Valtonen's (2017) study on mosquitos and ethics resonates with Santaoja's (2015) study on affects and amateur entomologists. Santaoja (2015) displays the affective enthusiasm and reflective empathy that entomologists exhibit towards insects, 'monstrous' out-of-place animals that we rarely think of as 'cuddly' or charismatic.

How do participants of any species come to *perform* relationships and how can these be understood (Birke, 2012)? Moreover, how could we make those seemingly difficult theoretical and methodological moves *beyond* anthropocentrism, as suggested by Braidotti? Despite committing to post-humanism, it remains challenging for us human writers to actually dismantle differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’. ‘We are and we are not the same’, Sayers (2017: 166) suggests. Could differences serve as important opportunities for ethical awareness and reflection (Hamilton and Taylor, 2013)? Or, could these be dismantled? Seeking to write in an entangled companionship with two clever and lovable Labrador retrievers, the world's most popular dog breed, I too have multiple ethical concerns. Different to ‘out-of-place’ or ‘monstrous’ animals, my brown-eyed dogs represent domesticated animals physically and emotionally proximate to me and my human family (Schuurman, 2017). They are largely humanized animals that embody affective charisma. They invite care, cuddles and touches. Embracing a feminist relational ethics and echoing Sayers (2017), my point here is that we could more carefully think about our relations to *all* kinds of animals in organizational life, and not limit our scope to those we think we ‘know’ better. Therefore, perhaps time has come for us humans to more reflexively seek to write and re-present the more-than-human world ‘differently’, by carefully seeking to sense, see, relate, listen to and be affected by the various living and sensate beings in our proximity and around us.

## **Theorizing human-canine relations**

‘[Dogs] are not a projection, nor the realization of an intention, nor the telos of anything. They are dogs; i.e. a species in obligatory, constitutive, historical, protean relationship with human beings’ (Haraway, 2003: 11–12).

This paper focuses on humanimal relationships as socio-historically and culturally contextual, and canine companions as ‘conscious, sentient and intentional agents that interact with humans in an emotionally meaningful way’ (Schuurman, 2017: 209; Charles and Davies, 2011). The interacting senses of smell, touch, hearing, taste and sight are crucial for interspecies interactions. Today, dog-ownership in the Western world is largely viewed as ‘a sign of affluence’ or the ‘westernization of sensibilities’ (Nast, 2006: 896). We live in times where more and more people in the affluent West prefer furry animal partners over human ones and where puppies have replaced human babies as the desired “affective objects” of many young couples (Vänskä, 2016). At the same time, we live in post-industrial societies of global inequalities where inequalities are – by definition – implicated in the ways in which care for (companion) animals is made possible (or not) (Nast, 2006). Consequently, Nast (2006) suggests that ‘pet love’<sup>2</sup> has become something of a sign of morality, responsibility and/or spiritual superiority. However, given that women and queers perform the ‘central purveyors of the languages and institutions of ‘pet love’ (Nast, 2006: 898), these forms of care are largely diminished, gendered and devalued. Gender powerfully constructs canine-human relations: gender(ed) prejudices and stereotypes play out in the feminization, subordination and devaluation of ‘pet love’. For example, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) stereotypically associate ‘elderly woman’ with ‘a little house dog’. Haraway (2008: 30) publicly calls out this kind of

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Pets’ or ‘companion animals’ remains a contested linguistic choice.

‘display of misogyny, fear of aging, incuriosity about animals, and horror at the ordinariness of flesh’.

As man’s best friend (*sic*) performs a hugely popular humanized animal, human-canine relations have been widely studied (see for example, Greenebaum, 2004; Durgee, 2008; Power, 2008). Still, the canine-human relationship is within Western consumer culture easily romanticized or stigmatized as a sentimental or bourgeois form of attachment (e.g. Knapp, 1998; Kuzniar, 2006; McHugh, 2012). In this paper, I work from the assumption that gendered, relational and situated human-canine performances are continuously done and undone through the everyday actions of the humanimals involved. This entail embodied, affective material and emotional aspects (Schuurman, 2017) in producing ‘practical actions in particular settings’ (Schuurman, 2017: 209; see also Beumer 2014). Building on post-human care that acknowledges our interdependences, entanglements and ethical engagement with the various sensing and knowing non-human others (e.g. Phillips, 2014, 2015; Gherardi and Rodeshini, 2016), humanimal co-constitutions arise from embedded everyday situations where nonhuman animals, human animals and the surrounding environment become interconnected and entangled. Building further on these insights, I will in what follows turn to the practice and methodology of feminist dog-writing.

### **On feminist dog-writing as an ontological stance, methodology and writing practice**

‘feminist dog-writing’ ways can be found to co-constitute human and nonhuman species in academic writing practices’ (Sayers, 2016: 1)

What kind of writing and language could allow us to represent and vividly express humanimal entanglements or becomings? Feminist dog-writing, originally developed in the field of cultural studies (McHugh, 2012; Haraway, 2003, 2008) serves as a creative way of *queering* or confusing writing, as it ‘involves playful relational co-constitution with nonhuman Others’

(Sayers, 2016: 11, see also McHugh, 2012). To me, dog-writing seeks to problematize the exclusively human-centered ‘standard’ academic writing that reproduces anthropocentrism, human certainty, and mastery in the world. By questioning or provoking human exceptionalism through the entangled, mundane and material acts of writing ‘differently’, feminist dog-writing invites us to experiment with writing the *humanimal*, or more relational, affectual and non-oppositional understandings of vibrant, living matter (Braidotti, 2006, 2013). To me, humanimals *become* through affective, material and mundane everyday acts. As a form of writing these affectual and relational becoming, feminist dog-writing seeks to express entangled co-constitutions in the world. Indeed, this creative and posthumanist form of writing could offer alternatives to more ‘conventional’, human-centered academic writing in the field of organization studies. Importantly, this kind of writing invites us to rethink the conventional species division predicated on both linguistic and material violence.

As Cloutier (2016: 69) recently put it, ‘*how we write invariably affects what we write and, by association, the knowledge claims we offer to the wider world*’. Following Haraway (2003), I approach research as an affective and processual world-making activity that extends beyond human worlds. As a sensate, more-than-human activity of living, being and thinking with others, research builds on embodied ethics (Pullen and Rhodes, 2015), care, relatedness and a willingness to engage with different lives (Fotaki and Harding, 2018). As an expression of relationality, care and dialogue, I commit to writing that reflects a situated, embedded and entangled worldview (e.g. Phillips 2015). Following Sayers (2016, 2017) and McHugh (2012), I position feminist dog-writing as a playfully critical, fun and alternative form of *écriture féminine* with political, performative and material aims. Specifically, this kind of writing calls into question the ways we construct, relate to, write and re-present Others. It invites us to carefully reflect upon how we, as writers, co-construct the ‘animal’ in human-animal relations or the ‘canine’ in the human-canine relationship. Moreover, feminist dog-writing invites us to

reflect upon philosophical concerns, how canines or animals intra-act, and interestingly, *who* humanimals become in and through these ethical relationships.

Writing ‘differently’ or writing to confuse phallogocentric conventions and the dominant masculine order has, of course, engaged critical organizational scholars over the years. How does feminist dog-writing differ from other kinds of expressive, experimental and/or feminist writing in the field of organization studies? How are we to tease out what is specific about dog-writing? To me, *écriture féminine* is not restricted to writers who identify as female (compare Thanem and Knights, 2018). From my point of view, feminist ‘dog-writing’ seeks to express the ordinary sticky ‘in-betweenness’ of affecting and being affected (Gherardi, 2019), where human and non-human bodies and materialities become entangled. The *feminist* in dog-writing suggests that gender is relevant to the practices and struggles of writing, and that we still need to problematize the gendered conventions that so often restrict our feminine, vulnerable or ‘alternative’ writing. Of course, skilled writers in our field have introduced alternatives to the hegemonic norm: dirty writing (Pullen and Rhodes, 2008), embodied writing (Boncori and Smith, 2018; Katila, 2018; Fotaki and Harding, 2018), vulnerable dream writing (Helin, 2018), and feminine writing (Vachhani, 2018). This rich, articulate, and norm-breaking body of literature has, however, rarely included animals or animal-writing (for exceptions, see Sayers, 2016, 2017). Similar to the approaches outlined above, feminist dog-writing disturbs the linear, rigid and ‘conventional’ academic language that ‘smooths out’ or erases the lived experiences and embodied struggles part of any research or writing, and only accepts certain forms, styles and topics as eligible. To me, this practice also problematizes questions of subjectivity (who is the writer, after all?), agency and embodiment. In other words, how do we understand subjectivity and whose writings, agencies and bodies are we including/excluding in the field of organization studies?

How do we write to gain multispecies agency or to locate and allow for non-human agencies to emerge? This is a difficult question. Following Sayers (2016, 2017), I position *interspecies* connection, empathy and mutual ‘becoming’ at the very heart of feminist dog-writing. Humanimals are embedded in complex and sometimes difficult relationships of care and domination. Embodied acts, movement, touch, affective intensities and language reflect these relationships. Touch, proximity and voice matters. How could we write about the entangled relationships that move and affect us? To what extent can we understand animal agencies, intentions and behaviors through incomplete, fragmented, and partial human meaning-making processes? Our writing is always political and gives voice to some agents and subjects, while silencing others. How could our writing even problematize or go beyond simplistic binaries, blur boundaries, and embrace multiplicity? How are we to make those difficult methodological moves towards greater inclusion, co-constitution and playful confusion? How do we *become-with*? (Haraway, 2008) Multiple methodological difficulties arise in re-writing feminist politics as productively queer and trans-species (McHugh, 2012). I raise more questions than provide answers. As writers, we can hardly escape the problem of representation: our writing as a form of engagement with the world (re)produces human representations of more-than-human worlds. Writing always violates and excludes. My dog-writing can only partially (and always incompletely) recount my interpretations of the actions, sensations and behaviors of canine companions (Power, 2008). Therefore, it remains unclear if my dog-writing allows Saga’s and Selma’s agency to emerge. Perhaps dog-writing also always risks reproducing the kind of anthropocentrism that it carefully seeks to critique or move away from?

To me, problematizing the very notion of ‘the animal’ is central to *feminist* dog-writing. Far from wanting to rule or dominate animals, feminist dog-writing seeks to embrace interspecies *becoming*. Dog-writing invites further philosophical, affectual and aesthetic reflection: how could we cultivate our human ability to sense and perceive the world through affective registers

and mutual embodied encounters (compare Staunæs and Raffnsøe, 2018)? How could posthuman or more-than-human relations of care be expressed in words or writings? My aim here is neither to sentimentalize, glorify, objectify or humanize dogs through writing. Rather, I'd like to more carefully listen to the animals proximate to me and learn from their significant 'otherness' (Haraway, 2008). Listening means attuning to. Relating to. Curiously striving to express the complexities of the more-than-human world as co-relational and becoming (McHugh, 2012). Understanding species *as* relationships (Birke, 2012).

Since 2012, my human life has been intertwined with the life of Saga and Selma, born in 2012 and 2016, respectively. Passionate about horses, I spent my childhood and youth at the stables to be proximate to the animals that enchanted and sometimes also respectfully frightened me. By making myself available to the horses, I could feel them attune affectively towards me, as well (compare Staunæs and Raffnsøe, 2018; Schuurman and Franklin, 2018). Horses taught plenty about trust, respect, embodied ethics and subtle, non-verbal communication. Echoing Birke and Brandt (2009) who describe riding as an embodied experience of boundary-crossing (and inevitable dominance) between the human and the horse, many precious childhood memories relate to experiencing happiness together with horses. Swimming with the horses in a lake in the Finnish countryside was unforgettable to me as a child, involving an intensely happy girl in a swimsuit on a slippery horseback holding on to the mane of a horse enjoying the swim. Accompanied by the water element, motion, the sound of hooves splashing water, the horse's relaxed sigh, muscular animal body, pale slender girl, kind breeze, warm sun's rays and nature all became interconnected (compare Game, 2001). Similar to this event, cantering across fields in motion have so many times filled my human body with the entangled sensation of being 'one with the horse'.



To me, companion canines are no extended selves, status symbols or means to an avocation (Hirschman, 1994). They are family members with different personalities (we do ascribe personhood to companion animals, don't we?), and friends of different species. Saga is a clever and confident black beauty. Selma is yellow, young and playful. Both come from a responsible breeder in the city of Helsinki. Today, my domesticated but not very disciplined animal companions live with us in an apartment in central Copenhagen, surrounded by wooded areas and water. Saga and Selma are regularly vaccinated, treated for ticks and parasites. They have their own blue animal EU-passports. Both carry microchips in their necks and their vet calls them 'skat' (dear). Their animal life entwines with human lives not only across shared domestic spaces, but also out in the public: parks, busy streets, cars, and airports. In a mundane and material sense, Saga and Selma make me feel inherently 'grounded' every day.

We interact through everyday rituals, gestures and bodily movements. Gender plays out in the ways I interpret my dogs, and in the ways I perform around them, too. Actively co-constructing our mutual relationship, my dogs are probably more intelligent than I know, they challenge human agency and, in a sense, discipline me 'into acceptance of their own 'bestly ways' and practices' (Fox, 2018: 72). Although care and proximity are embedded in these mutual relations, everyday life is by no means always harmonious and happy. Conflicts, tensions, insecurities, power intensities as well as sentiments of irritation, (human) guilt and worry shape our co-existence. The 'significant otherness' (Haraway, 2008) of Selma and Saga interests, fascinates and sometimes irritates me. Strangers approach my dogs on a daily basis. Before getting Saga, I could not imagine how differently a black retriever is co-constructed compared to a golden. Different to Selma, stereotypically constructed as the friendly and 'goofy' dog, Saga's blackness and muscular appearance 'others' her. In what follows, I seek to practice dog-writing and illuminate how my interpretation of this writing could open up for surprising, novel and unknown possibilities in the field of organization studies.

## Struggling to write humanimal entanglements

*Engaging with others*, whatever gender, race, species.

being-in-the-world with others,

caring deeply and compassionately.

The narrativity of our entangled bodies.

‘Completely familiar and completely other’?

*Mutuality*. Classed-gendered-raced-humanimalities

A human writer struggling to express

affective interspecies agencies,

shared embodiments,

humanimal continuums,

in ways that go beyond binaries,

blur boundaries,

*disrupt* binaries!

DISRUPT binaries –

that is the promise of post-qualitative writing.

The smell of paws;

buttery popcorn mixed with freshly cut grass.

Four legs give more stability and grounding than two.

Sensory olfactory experiences

Shared affective experiences

*Moving* in a *moving–more–than–human* world

This kind of writing,

typically *excluded*.

Shared sofas and armchairs.

Soft denseness of Labrador coat,

a cold, moist nose tip capturing detailed odor pictures of the world.

The warmth of an animal body

touching my legs against the wooden floor.

Dog fur, drool and paw marks on my clothes.

Problematizing species division?

How do we *become*, together?

embracing multiplicity,

entanglements of

dogsleashcollarshumanpathsoutdoorsrubberainbootswetgrassscentofraincoatsdogs

smelly treat crumbles in my pocket.

The struggle of writing multispecies assemblages.

Saga and Selma trigger me to reflect further upon ‘the traditional human-animal divide’ (Hamilton and Taylor, 2013: 139) and how boundaries are constructed or maintained in-between us. ‘To know a dog is to be interested in what it is like to be a dog’, Horowitz (2016, 2018) puts it. Sensing bodies co-experiencing the world. When I gently touch the denseness of shiny Labrador coat, I’m touched right back. Meanwhile, completely familiar and completely other. The physiology of canine corporeality affects how dogs perceive, move and react in the world. Olfaction is fundamental to my long-nosed retrievers’ experiences of the world (Horowitz, 2018). Attuned to motion and retrieving, a busy street, a skateboarder or a squirrel carries different meanings to them than to me.

Cixous (1993) encourages us to write about that which is foreign and unknown. How uncomfortable. Difficult. Perhaps even embarrassing. How refreshing to undermine my human sense of authority as a writer (Marvin and McHugh, 2014). It feels both liberatory and transformative. By emphasizing humanimal entanglements and attempts to write humanimal assemblages, I experiment with writing the narrativity of ‘humanimal’ bodies, as well as extend agency to more-than-humans and materiality. Still, I struggle to express such becomings. I keep struggling to write ‘differently’. So far, dog-writing has been carried out by prominent, white and American scholars like Donna Haraway. Perhaps one has to be as prominent as Haraway to get away with it. Perhaps I cannot.

Crafting affective proximity

Feeling, *sensing* and responding to you –

Listening carefully –

How can I recognize *your* needs?

Experiencing the world, together

Having a sense of place,

together.

*Belongingness.*

Sharing a relaxing moment on the sofa,

a furious run, a tranquil stroll, a walk in the woods

*always moving* together,

mundane joys,

bodily pains, irritation, anger

becoming entangled with plantsleavestreesdrychillywindraindrops.

Escaping that incomprehensive EU-funding application

that stole way too much time,

and momentarily sucked my *joie de vivre*.

Escaping the burdens of motherhood,  
the chaos and noise at home,  
to nurture posthumanist relations of care  
*carving out space and time*

away from other duties

Moving with you

to breathe,

to feel,

to live,

to survive.

Letting go in animal presence.

### **Struggling to write posthumanist care**

What does it mean for one's experience of the world –

to have the capacity to detect hormones, pheromones, and cancers?

to *smell* fear, happiness, or sadness?

to smell all those bodies with their unique affective histories, material traces and memories,

who just moved through a room just before us?

to deconstruct an odor before it is even fully smelled?

Take me on your scent walks or 'smell' walks,

Take your time to smell, sniff and *deconstruct* detailed odor pictures

*you* get to choose our shared paths based on interesting smells,

Exploring the world

while *not* being directed by me.

Caring relationships are compassionate, complex relational and difficult. How could we openly express less human-centered writing that builds on empathetic appreciation, posthumanist care and relating to others, via embodied self-reflection, empathy, and close observation (Sayers, 2016)? ‘Daring to care has no place in a system that privileges rationality’, Phillips (2015, 57) argues. Does not the compassionate dare to care – so often repressed and neglected – deserve to be more vividly expressed in our academic texts? Feminist dog-writing encourages us to attune towards other-than-human experiences, where ‘interspecies empathy is central in thinking about the nonhuman Other’ (Sayers, 2016: 5). To do so, I’ll have to use my imagination to consider ‘what it is like to be a nonhuman animal and how the world looks from their perspective’ (Sayers, 2017: 166). Seek to get beyond the Vitruvian man, as Sayers puts it. Challenge my writing.

To Hemmings (2012: 148), feminist work ‘highlights the importance of feeling for others as a way of transforming ourselves and the world, and thus renders affect as a way of moving across ontology and epistemology’. How could we vividly express affective, posthumanist care in our writings, without sentimentalizing or romanticizing? Attentive to the wellbeing of my dogs, I continuously observe their behaviors, movements, and subtle gestures. These close observations activate my entire human sensory framework, crafting interspecies empathy and care (Sayers, 2016). Interpreting subtle cues, I rely on my affective registers to make assumptions about the condition of my beloved dogs. By crafting connectedness and acting towards Saga and Selma, my responsibility is to extensively care for them – in a sense, *enable* them (Phillips et al., 2014) – and also to get to *know* them individually (Schuurman, 2017), so that I can respond to them, recognize, and meet their needs. What could I *do* for my dogs? What kind of life would Saga and Selma desire? What makes them happy and curious about the world? Needless to say, I do feel guilty and insufficient in our relation. I sense the responsibilities, joys and anxieties of caring, and feel them in my body each day.

Are you moving with ease, without pain in your hip?

How are you carrying your body?

What makes you stiff, nervous or anxious in your body?

Saga, you are quite proud of your tail, aren't you?

What does your tail behaviour signify, in different situations?<sup>3</sup>

Are you well, my friend?

You wait for us to go out,

You wait for us to cross the busy street on the way to the park,

You wait for permission to greet other dogs on the leash,

You wait for us humans in the family to get home,

You wait for dinner,

Your life is full of waiting, is it?

How can I wait for *you*?

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<sup>3</sup> If we examine dog tail behavior closely, we find out that dogs wag their tails asymmetrically, and that the tail could tell us something about what is going on in their brain. (Horowitz, 2018)

## Discussion and conclusions

Could feminist dog-writing  
inspire us to open up the senses,  
to be affected, vulnerable  
and ‘response-able’ (Staunæs and Raffnsøe, 2018)?

How could we write to create openings and vocabularies for multispecies assemblages and humanimal entanglements in the field of OS? Could feminist dog-writing bring affective language to the largely nonverbal, embedded intimacy of entangled humanimal lives? Human-centered, disembodied and masculinist norms continue to shape our (academic) writing. Meanwhile, dogs remain ‘a safe object of chitchat but not of scholarly reflection’, as Kuzniar (2006, 2) reminds us. Indeed, in a patriarchal culture, being affectionate or entangled with animals remains potentially suspect, irrational, feminine and even perverse (McHugh, 2012). The anthropocentrism of science (partly) explains why organizational scholars have thought less seriously about humanimal entanglements, and how these matter to organizational life. As a posthumanist critique of the dominant *human*-centeredness of ‘conventional’ writing in organizational studies, this paper highlighted how writing through the relational and affectual becoming of ‘humanimals’ might inspire us human writers to write and perhaps even care ‘differently’ within our scholarly field.

By seeking to write ‘differently’, I join the pack of researchers who address the complexities of academic writing (e.g. Phillips et al., 2014; Pullen & Rhodes, 2015), and write to confuse the ‘masculine libidinal economy’ (see Phillips et al., 2014; see also Pullen and Rhodes, 2008; Rhodes, 2018; Vachhani, 2018). As humans, we act and write from the unique position of power and authority; we need to think more about our ethical responsibilities. This paper argues



that the writing of embedded humanimal relations invites us to reconsider our ethical relations with others, and how relations of power, exclusion, oppression and violence become expressed in and through the very acts of writing. ‘It is not only materialities, fleshy similarities, which we share with other species, but also how we/they engage with the world behaviourally’, suggests Birke (2012, 150). Feminist dog-writing problematizes the hegemonic ideological stance towards animals or non-human ‘others’ that conventional academic writing tends to (re)produce. Meanwhile, despite the ever-growing interest in posthumanisms in the field of OS, it has remained relatively unclear to me how different ‘posthuman’ arguments will develop the scholarly debates. By here engaging with posthumanism through the mundane, material and entangled relationships with canine companions, this paper tried to understand posthumanism not as an abstract, detached macho philosophy, but as a lived practice of ongoing interspecies struggles, co-experienced, embodied and embedded in the affective dynamics of an ordinary life (Stewart, 2007). To me, feminist dog-writing seeks to be processual, open, sentient and relational. As a practice, then, it could help us to ‘flesh out’ writing without cleansing the multiple sensibilities and struggles part of writing in entanglements *with* others.

Writing is an embodied struggle, and so is feminist dog-writing. So far, feminist dog-writers – apart from Haraway (2008) – have mostly written *about* dog-writing by outlining the frames for such writing to take place (see McHugh, Sayers, 2016, 2017; Satama and Huopainen, 2018). Few writers have ‘demonstrated’ this difficult practice by actually moving away from people-writing towards more-than-human writing (Hamilton and Taylor, 2013), illustrating humanimal co-constitutions in practice. As a queer and experimental form of writing, feminist dog-writing promises to deliver post-human and entangled forms of writing. Methodologically, these forms remain difficult to ‘deliver’ in practice. With this paper, I tried to disrupt binaries in searching for more open-ended expressions of ‘more-than-human-writing’. Still, it remains

unclear if dog-writing here actually managed to disturb the human/animal division. Was this dualism, after all, upheld in the dog-writing I performed? At, times it certainly was), which reminds me how difficult it is to confuse human superiority, or seek to write *beyond* human centrality. Sayers (2016) argues for more animal-writing in the field of OS, and I cannot but agree. Animal-writing creates novel possibilities for re-thinking and re-writing organizations (see also Ergene et al., 2018), decenter human hegemony, offering us alternative paths to knowledge creation.

Is thinking, feeling or writing even possible without animals? Besides typically sensing the soft denseness of Labrador coat and the warmth of animal body touching my bare legs while typing words at the wooden kitchen table in central Copenhagen late at summer nights, occasional flies in the summer evening, loud seagulls and early birds, the relaxing sound of dog snoring and a deal of anxiety were part of writing this paper. I pondered and struggled with the issue of making feminist dog-writing concrete, hands-on, expressive and *felt* while Saga and Selma walked me through rose-gardens and along the herbaceous borders in Kongens Have, the royal gardens in Copenhagen. I felt happy and privileged to revise this piece on a lovely writing retreat in the lush Scottish countryside among academic friends, sheep, horses, birds, gin tonics, tea, biscuits and a sympathetic, old three-legged sheep dog. Still, I struggled to write ‘differently’ and doubted if I could make a compelling link with dog-writing and the field of organization studies.

‘Our identities and reputations as academics are largely formed on the basis of what and how we write’, Cloutier (2016, 69) reminds us. The core management texts in the field of organization studies continue to be dominated by the writings of lone, Western, middle-aged cis-white and middle-class men (Ashcraft, 2009; Fotaki and Harding, 2018; Beavan, 2018). These writings, produced by a relatively homogenous group of privileged individuals, have

controlled our field to the extent that multiple gendered embodiments and lived experiences have been silenced. Arguably, the conventions around writing have rarely allowed for playfulness, confusion, embodied struggle, incompleteness or uncertainty (Pullen and Rhodes, 2008; Sayers, 2017). Dimensions of power, gender, animality, race, class and sexuality shape and affect our writing. Many of us struggle – and fail – to write in the male-stream manner that counts (sic) in the neoliberal Business School. How can we even write if we are expected to write in disembodied ways that repress our sensate bodies, embodied writings or the topics we actually *feel* for? Don't we need more diverse, queer, playful, critical, queer, transgender, feminist, non-binary *crazycatladies-kind-of* writing in the field of organization studies?

Saga has climbed next to me in the sofa and pushes her head in my lap. It is trickier now for me to balance the laptop. Should I just finish, here and now? Close the laptop, focus on being in-this-moment, and nurture relations of posthuman care. Saga's eyes are closed, her breath is calm, and her entire body seems relaxed. Writing is about writing for change in the academy, as well as daring to take risks as a writer. It is, after all, the radically unknown, alternative, unexplored and overlooked that usually leads to intriguing, exciting and novel insights. Finally, feminist dog-writing brings attention to the gendered power relations that shape our writing practices. Powerful gendered expectations and norms are projected on any writer who adopts a specific subject position. Sadly, writing compassionately or differently in the neoliberal university has been replaced by predictable, instrumental and rational writing (Kiriakos and Tienari, 2018). Aschcraft (2018: 2) writes: 'crusty yet tenacious scientific norms treat knowledge production as dispassionate mental labor and emotion as a bodily intrusion that distorts reason'.

The attitudes towards feminist philosophy continue to be chilly in the neoliberal Business School. In this context, feminist dog-writing is likely to meet institutional denigration and

resistance. As a verb, then, to bitch could mean to complain. Complaining can be critiquing (McHugh, 2012). Critique disturbs status quo. Critique challenges. Critique changes. We need critical, challenging and disturbing writing. Taken together, feminist dog-writing could offer radical possibilities for the transformational writing of gender and posthumanism in the field of organization studies. Women's voices and power are continuously dismissed by positioning the 'threatening' female subject as subordinate, monstrous or foreign to the male norm as especially the introduction of this paper sought to demonstrate. We still have a long way to go to dismantle gendered stereotypes, problematize anthropocentric masculinities and develop more equal organizations. We need to keep writing differently and write for change in the field of organization studies. We need writing that dares to care.

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