A Project of Mourning: Attuning to the Impact of 'Anthropocentric-Noise Disorder' on Non-Human Kin

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Abstract

As a project of mourning and activist gesture undertaken to cultivate multispecies justice, this chapter aims to counter mediated invisibilsation of non-human animal trauma, particularly as this phenomenon has emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic. It considers an ontology of collateral trauma (as existing terrestrially and oceanically, in the present but hopefully not the future) as brought into existence by a zoonotic disease, and a socio-technical arrangement that includes media, *the* media and *humans*. The focus is the disappearance of 'Gulf Livestock 1', a 'livestock' vessel that sank somewhere in the Northwestern Pacific Ocean, on 2 September 2020, after sailing into the heart of a category four storm. Anthropos is emphasised as humans seem absent in phrases/neologisms currently in circulation to describe the 'fake news' phenomenon, including 'information disorder', 'disinfodemic', 'viral disinformation' and 'massive infodemic'. With an emphasis on human 'rights' *only*, non-human animal trauma is something that UNESCO re-inscribes by not addressing, or perhaps even noticing, despite aiming to comprehensively describe the impact of Covid-19 mis- and dis- information in a recent policy brief. As a seemingly generalised condition, such an emphasis, and orientation towards 'not-noticing', is urgent to address as anthropocentrism has created the situation, we find ourselves occupying.

Keywords: pandemic, Covid-19, (social) media, fake news, non-human animals, grief, mourning, Gulf Livestock 1, live-export, meat-industry.

Introduction

> Reports state the sound of the dog hitting the car woke neighbours up as it sounded like a tyre explosion. They then found the dog lying dead on the ground with its blood staining the bricks. (NZ Herald 2020)

During the pandemic, transparent, synthetic surfaces (windows, camera lenses, and computer screens) provided the medium to marvel at animals 'reclaiming' exterior spaces, but also to jettison them from interior ones. Shortly after the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared a global health emergency in early February 2020, rumours that cats and dogs can spread the virus began to circulate, resulting in people throwing pets from apartment windows (NZ Herald 2020; Seven News 2020), dumping them on streets (Campbell 2020), and euthanising them at veterinary clinics (Berry 2020). The rumour likely emerged due to a media-outlet 'tweaking' the words of a scientist who had appeared on a television network and then posting the modified version on the social-media platform 'Weibo' (NZ Herald 2020). Instead of saying that cats and dogs who had been in contact with Covid-19 positive patients should be quarantined, it was reported that they could spread the virus. It is difficult to dignify the death of the subject of the newspaper excerpt above (which another news-paper article identifies as a French Bulldog) with an exact date of death as the articles reporting the event do not provide this level of detail, only those of a more visceral nature concerning the event's aftermath — details we wouldn't

be given if this were a human death—and that it took place at 4 am (NZ Herald 2020; Seven News 2020).[1]

The pandemic has heralded into existence instances of non-human animals becoming subjects of 'fake news'. Examples come in the form of erroneous conclusions they can spread the virus and viral micro-length videos that show them in the throes of continually 'reclaiming' space (this is not to say that individual animals are represented in a tautological mode of 'continually' reclaiming space, rather the sheer quantity of these stories creates a repetition of this narrative). These examples point to seemingly trivial, sometimes fleeting and insubstantial practices that in the first example, at least, are capable of producing dire consequences for non-human animals. This chapter thus attunes itself to mediated practices of information dissemination constitutive of 'information disorder', as they have emerged during the pandemic and pertain to non-human animals. How do these practices manifest and interact, and what ways of thinking and outcomes do they preclude and produce?

In attuning itself accordingly, this chapter considers the utility of an existing framework to describe information disorder when non-human animals are the subject. Wardle and Derakhshan (2017: 5) argue that the term 'fake news', which has been co-opted by politicians to describe news coverage they find disagreeable and wish to clamp down on, is 'woefully inadequate to describe the complex phenomenon of fake news'. They propose an alternative framework for examining information disorder — one that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation has recently used in their policy brief, 'Disinfodemic: Deciphering Covid-19 Disinformation' (UNESCO 2000). Wardle and Derakhshan's (2017) framework proposes three information-types, no doubt familiar to readers, constitutive of information disorder. *Misinformation* and *disinformation* involve false information; however, the intent of the agent disseminating it differs: misinformation is shared without harm intended, contrary to the motivation behind the sharing of disinformation. *Malinformation*, 'genuine' information that is shared to cause damage 'often by moving information designed to stay private into the public sphere', is the third (2017: 5). Wardle and Derakhshan's (2017)

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[1] However, it would be unfair to attribute these violent events exclusively to the singular event involving the 'tweaking' of information. A poster produced by the WHO, on how to 'protect yourself and others from getting sick', which, according to a 'reverse-image search' website, first appeared online on 20 January 2020 (not long before the French Bulldog was thrown from an apartment window) potentially sends mixed messages concerning the epidemiological role of companion animals in virus transmission, or at least leaves things wide-open for interpretation. See https://www.who.int/images/default-source/health-topics/coronavirus/2handwash.tmb-549v.png?sfvrsn=cf9e093e_1c (accessed 20 January 2020). I have assumed that the poster is intended to provide Covid-19 health advice, although it is not possible to definitively associate it with the virus: unlike other WHO coronavirus-related posters, it does not include obvious phrases/words like '#coronavirus', but the URL to retrieve the image includes this word (additionally, I happened to stumble upon the poster in a public bathroom a month or so before New Zealand went into its first lockdown, i.e., the poster appeared contemporaneously with the virus). Whilst hygiene information contained in the poster is not 'incorrect' (it is indeed sensible to wash one's hands after handling animal waste to avoid getting sick, as advised in one bullet-point), if the poster intended to provide Covid-19 health advice, then the brevity of information in this bullet-point, and the lack of an obvious connection between the poster and the virus, might contribute to an ecology of information practices that generates ambiguity and leads people to conclude that animals might spread the virus. The events propelled by the event of information 'tweaking' prompted the WHO to produce another poster for its suite of 'myth-busting' posters that aim to dispel myths concerning how the virus can be contracted and treated. See https://www.who.int/images/default-source/health-topics/coronavirus/myth-busters/mythbuster-1.png (accessed 20 January 2020). Thus, a poster that aims to counter extreme violence towards non-human animals exists alongside ones aiming to counter beliefs that adding hot peppers to meals and taking hot baths are viable treatment methods. But other than this, the poster's minimal information on the topic of non-human animals and coronavirus, and quick shift to more generalised hygiene practices that humans should observe when engaging with animals seems to provide an underwhelming response to the violence engendered by beliefs that animals (in this instance, pets) might spread the virus. More thoughtful and complex information exists on the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website, which, amongst other topics, discusses how pets might be protected from the risks that humans infected with coronavirus may present to them. See https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/pets.html (accessed 20 January 2020).

conceptualisation seems much about information's 'presence', perhaps because it is easier to examine the 'truthfulness' of information that appears to us in the 'positive' and attach its appearance to agentic humans. I therefore argue that the model, which tends to be applied to scrutinise information ecologies where human interests only are at stake, is human-centric. As an analytical tool, its version of 'truth' seems to privilege a reality that appears to us in the positive (as that which is identifiable, fathomable and knowable), and information that demands our attention and response, not that which is altogether missing, absent and excluded.

In the context of the pandemic, identifying instances of mis- and dis- information where non-human animals are the subject has been a 'hit and miss' affair that has led me to a smattering of disparate, sometimes seemingly trifling practices and episodes, which are nonetheless capable of producing dire consequences for non-human animals. Three instances I have identified include the previously mentioned episode involving the 'tweaking' of information. In this instance, posters produced by an organisation not typically associated with contributing to an information ecology that generates uncertainty and ambiguity possibly interacted with this fleeting moment of inaccuracy to produce unwarranted alarm. The second involves the viral, sometimes 'fake', videos and images of animals 'reclaiming' space during lockdown, and the uplifting and amplification of this content by news-agencies, resulting in frequently articulated conclusions of 'nature's' infinite and immediate capacity to heal (Searle and Turnbull 2020; Taylor and Fraser 2020).[2] The third instance is a more singular event involving the re-purposing of a video supposedly showing the removal of a 'Chrysanthemum' bat infestation from a rooftop in Wuhan (the species of bat scientists believe from which the virus originated). The video, which was uploaded to Facebook and went viral, may facilitate a reduced sense of human responsibility for the evolution of the virus by suggesting that it is a result of (and may be exacerbated by) 'out-of-control' nature (O'Sullivan 2020b). It was, in fact, filmed by a roofing company in Florida, almost a decade ago, and shows the removal of Mexican Fruit Bats — one of the other 1400 species of bat that are in existence (Kaur 2020).

But what of information's altogether omission; its absence? Concerning ourselves with information's absence might prompt us to think more carefully, and therefore caringly, about more-than-human perspectives and experiences. Hence, for example, it is not possible, or indeed relevant, to pinpoint precisely where and when political leaders fail to acknowledge how the virus instantiates the prevailing condition that is the exploitation of non-human animals because the failure to do so is a persistent, distributed and generalised condition, one that is not so much about *mis-* or *dis-* information — a model that is premised on the truthfulness of information that is presented to us in the positive, as much as it is about its altogether omission. I argue that mediated responses to the disappearance of Gulf Livestock 1 (GL1), a tragedy I will discuss shortly, provides another example where information

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[2] After having spent much time thinking about these visual artefacts, I have concluded that another harm may be the thought that is produced via a combination of their sheer quantity, micro-length and representationalism. By 'representationalism', I mean that as a result of their abundance, the video-clips repeatedly show non-human animals in the act of performing, and only performing, the act which humans have assigned significance to. When watching, there is no need to wait for this footage, as it is all we are presented with: everything in the footage is significant, nothing is insignificant, we do not have to attend (watch and wait) with patience. The experience of viewing these videos might be a very different experience to that produced by viewing three other screen-based visual artefacts that have emerged in the context of the pandemic, where the significant 'moment' is not immediately discernible. These artefacts are the data that is generated by small cameras that have been attached to animals by scientists either before or during lockdowns (see the 'Covid-19 bio-logging initiative', https://www.bio-logging.net, accessed 20 January 2020); the collection of 10-minute length videos showing views through domestic windows, as recorded by people in lockdown (see https://www.window-swap.com, accessed 20 January 2020); and the long-take footage produced by an underwater camera that has been submerged in the depths of the ocean (see https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-06/rv-falkor-on-research-expedition-with-no-scientists-on-board/12215962, accessed 20 January 2020). The viewing experience of these three artefacts might be characterised by affects additional to the delight that people appeared to experience when viewing the videos of animals 'reclaiming' space. Other affects may include boredom due to extended periods where nothing in particular happens—a result of the non-human nature of the recording resulting in the camera training itself on apparently insignificant, mundane detail.

concerning the interests, experiences and perspectives of the animal is omitted, and like practices of mis- and dis- information, that the practices that produce this omission are also constitutive of untruthfulness.

Hence, the consequences of Covid-19 on non-human animals manifest in the immediate present, in all their visceral materiality, but may also be diffuse and long-range in nature. The lack of public reflection, stimulated by political leaders and/or the media, on the exploitative human-animal relationships involved in the virus's evolution may produce such longer-range consequences. Arguably, such invisibilsation renders links between everyday practices and a way of thinking that led to the virus unable to be drawn so that when lockdowns began to be lifted, the symbolic gesture signalling the 're-opening' of the economy came to be the rush to fast-food outlets and the eating of the flesh of another (Kirkness 2020). It is worth noting, too, that whilst the pandemic has given rise to mediated practices of information dissemination that not only obfuscate but also produce animal trauma it has also created spaces for future 'mechanisms of obscurity' to materialise. Laws and policies, or 'ag-gag' bills (Bittman 2011), which threaten to 'deepen, instead of loosening, humans' grip on animals and the harmful ways we treat them', have been passed whilst the world has been distracted by anthropocentric concerns: the threat to human health that the virus poses (Oliver 2020). The passing of 'Bill 156', now known as the 'Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act 2020', by the Government of Ontario on 18 June 2020, will make it difficult for activists and journalists to reveal harms committed to animals and humans in the context of factory farming. The Bill was passed to supposedly 'protect Ontario's farms and farm animals from trespassers', including would-be whistle-blowers, and 'protect contamination' of the food supply' (Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act 2020). Therefore, the penning of a legal artefact will reinforce mediated omissions of animal perspectives, facilitating information practices that are productive of non-truthfulness, or truth's incompleteness, as it pertains to them.

Since the animal appears to be the disappeared other of politics and media, rather than exclusively use concepts like deceit, lies, *mis-* and *dis-* information to describe information practices of dissemination where the animal is already absent and excluded (indeed, was likely never there in the first place), I am interested in patterns of omission that obscure the interests of animals and obfuscate their trauma — rendering it unintelligible. The concepts I am interested in are *omission*, *obscuration*, *obfuscation,* and *eschewal* — concepts that describe the outcomes of what I term a type of 'anthropocentric-noise disorder'. As a concept, anthropocentric-noise disorder draws attention to the fact that the privileging of human interests in our visual and auditory practices of information dissemination is also constitutive of an information disorder. The concept also quite obviously re-inscribes humans — subjects that are otherwise absent in terms like 'information disorder' (Wardle and Derakhshan 2017), 'disinfodemic', 'viral disinformation' (UNESCO 2020) and 'massive infodemic' (WHO 2020) — as being responsible for the cultivation of this disorder.

Following a line of thought offered by fake news discourse (and the word 'truth', a word that represents the antithesis of fake news, and is readily associated with transparency and thus visuality), humans' 'synthetic encounters' with non-human animals 'reclaiming' space during lockdowns (i.e., through windows, screens or camera lenses), and the disappearance of GL1 during Typhoon Maysak, a tragedy that took place during the pandemic, these words are sensorially, atmospherically, visually and materially-inflected. For instance, the word 'obfuscate' has a Latin derivation: 'ob' means 'in front of, before', and 'fuscare' means 'to make dark'. Fuscare comes from 'fuscus', meaning 'dark', which is related to the word 'dusk' — a liminal spacetime, which condenses transitions to do with light, temperature, sound, smell, and any other sense that may be intelligible to animals, but perhaps not to humans, into comparatively shorter, more accelerated chunks of time than that comprising day and night. Dawn and dusk happen to be time intervals when many species become active. We were reminded of this during the pandemic when we sensed the heightened presence of other animals, reporting an intensification of bird-song, for instance. However, like the fish in the Venetian canals that people also reported noticing during lockdown, which were there all along, only invisible due to the level of visual and sonic 'noise' in the water (as created by boat engines making the water murky, and likely sonically inhospitable), the bird-song may have been present all along, albeit — like the animal perspectives discussed in this chapter — channelled out; obscured, by anthropocentric noise.

To attend to the outcomes of anthropocentric-noise disorder (as something that makes its presence felt visually and sonically, materially and discursively), I have therefore drawn on a list of words that come via non-human phenomena, such as light and water, and in the instance of 'obfuscation', via human encounters with non-human animals during the pandemic. In doing so, a sort of 'right of reply' to be taken up by animals emerges — one that manifests endogenous to the context of the production of a visual archive of animals allegedly reclaiming space.

I now wish to orient this introduction to the specific context that this chapter is focused on — the mediated eschewal of information pertaining to the disappearance of GL1. Beirne (2014: 49) argues that slaughterhouses have 'become all but invisible, tending to be built far from human populations, at sites that are both unseen and unknown'. But this movement towards the invisible is also true of sites and spacetime zones of animal exploitation that are more liminal, less-anchored, than that represented by the 'bricks and mortar' of the slaughterhouse. The terrestrial transportation of farmed animals kept in holding pens until a suspension on live-export is lifted, to the port where a vessel waiting to be loaded with the animals is moored, is an apt expression of the space-time-site liminality of the live-export trade, and its movement towards the invisible. In November 2020, this terrestrial, soon-to-be-oceanic transportation, took place 'under cover of darkness', when the 'Ocean Drover' (the world's largest 'livestock' vessel) was loaded with animals before departing from 'PrimePort Timaru' (Timaru Port) in Aotearoa New Zealand (Taunton 2020). This event, which was New Zealand's second live-export shipment after the GL1 tragedy, exists outside of the archive; outside of time: the ship's visit is not recorded on a schedule published on the port's website, where the arrival and departure times of other ships are included, nor is the visit of another livestock vessel, the 'Ocean Swagman', which arrived in the same port, four days later. The port allows 'customers' (whoever they are: they are not easy to identify) who do not want 'their movements to be on a shipping website' to be left off the schedule (see Mohanlall 2019). But in the context of live-export, omissions from shipping schedules instantiate just one way in which the animal is omitted (from the archive and our knowledge producing practices).[3] In the section that follows, I look further at how information practices relating to live-export, and to the GL1 tragedy, in particular, render the animal invisible, and that which concerns them, omitted.

Gulf Livestock 1 and the Informatic Eschewal of Non-Human Animal Trauma

> In the future, most products, including plants and domestic animals, will probably be tagged with microchips which will supply, in real time, information as to their state (the wear and tear of materials, the maturing of plants, the health of animals, the obsolescence of foodstuffs and medicines), their localisation (Global Positioning System (GPS) or satellite surveillance devices) and movements (tagging of migrating birds, traceability of products, etc.). We sense, here, the danger that such a mechanism might be applied increasingly to human beings, a development which could, in parallel with the rise of security systems, open a new chapter: that of global surveillance systems. (UNESCO 2005: 48)

> We saw that money was no concern if it meant that experts could locate the missing Malaysian flight [MH370]; this is sold as a humanitarian concern, but one that is never extended to melting icebergs or collapsing ecosystems. (Turpin in Franke and Turpin 2015: 150)

At the intersection of science, technology, nature, and now zoonoses and pandemic, our capitalist condition refuses nature the 'right to opacity' that poet and philosopher Edouard Glissant argues that on behalf of everyone, we must clamour for (Glissant 1997: 194). Instead, we demand nature's complete visibility, knowability and availability. Blas uses the term 'informatic opacity' to refer to

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[3] Strategies of 'synthetic activism', undertaken to produce and populate a different archive, coexisted with the act of writing this chapter. These strategies involved tracking livestock vessels' movements via an app that tracks ships via satellite and articulating propositions for possibly impossible artworks. I locate one such proposition literally in the margins, in the footnotes of this chapter (see f/n 11).

aesthetic strategies that resist global surveillance, capture technologies and biometric profiling, and argues that Glissant's demand for opacity 'refuses a logic of total transparency and rationality, disrupting the transformation of subjects into categorisable objects of Western knowledge' (Blas 2018: 198). For Glissant, 'opacity is an unknowability—and, hence, a poetics…. [which] must be defended in order for any radically democratic project to succeed,'; it is also 'fundamentally aesthetic' (Blas 2016: 149-150).

I do not need to look far to identify some of the ways in which we attempt to deny nature the right to opacity, in fact, I only need to refer to textual sources endogenous to the research-event that is the writing of this chapter. One of these sources happens to be UNESCO's policy brief: 'Disinfodemic: Deciphering Covid-19 Disinformation', which warns us that the 'disinfodemic', with its turn away from 'verifiable, reliable information, such as that produced in science and professional journalism', poses a threat to the formation of 'knowledge societies' (2020: 3). Knowledge societies is a concept referred to by UNESCO (2005), and some of the future (now current?) ways society might deny animals the right to opacity, in the context of a knowledge society, is pointed to in a paragraph of this 'survey' type publication (see quote above). Although UNESCO (2005: 48) cautions us on the risks posed by surveillance technology, asking, 'are our societies going to be societies of technological surveillance? In the name of openness and the free circulation of information and knowledge, should knowledge societies always lead to confusion between knowledge for all and knowledge on all? Is there not a right *not* to know?' — the potential incursion of such technology into animal bodies is not similarly troubled.[4]

Though UNESCO (2005) refers to a future that *could* be today, we can also look to a more actualised present for examples of how we endeavour to deny nature the right to opacity (the right to hide from our gaze and resist our desire to extract knowledge). In the context of the pandemic, two very different examples come to mind. In the first, ocean floor mapping continues unabated, even with coronavirus restrictions in place. In May 2020, the Schmidt Ocean Institute research vessel, 'Falkor', surveyed the depths of the Queensland Plateau in the remote Coral Sea Marine Park, with only crew and technicians on board (typically there might also be 10-15 scientists). On this month-long expedition, SuBastian, a camera-equipped remotely operated vehicle (ROV), recorded hours of seafloor footage. This footage, which included overlays of commentary from scientists at home across Australia, was live-streamed via YouTube (Shorey and Kim 2020). It is plausible to argue that the mapping of the ocean floor and other areas imperilled by human activity may provide a base-line from which to compare future deterioration. Additionally, Troon (2020) argues that the type of long-take footage produced by underwater cameras may provoke an ethic of attentiveness and care, fostering attunement to ecological degradation. I agree with both of these arguments, but perhaps we also need to consider the inter-subject (human-nature) ethics involved during the actual recording of the footage, as well as the absurdity that is the contrast between what is possible to technologically perform in one context, but impossible to perform, or even consider performing, in another (such as in the search for GL1).

In the second example, an aquarium in Tokyo asked people to FaceTime their 'lonely' spotted garden eels who were supposedly missing humans so much during lockdown that they became 'shy', burying under the sand when staff walked by (Elliot 2020). The fact that a brief respite from the human-gaze may have prompted the eels to realise just how over-exposed they are to it — installed as they are in a small tank that provides humans 360° views of them, whilst listening to hotel-lobby style music — was not considered (O'Sullivan 2020a).

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[4] If the future outlined by UNESCO (2005) is representative of the 'knowledge society' (a concept summoned back into existence by UNESCO [2020]), the creation of which is threatened by the existence of the disinfodemic, might such a society be so desirable given that incursions into animal bodies to facilitate knowledge production represents the type of extractivist thinking that has brought us to this moment in the Anthropocene, and to the immediate pandemic situation we find ourselves occupying? Or, might UNESCO's commitment to iconic discursive-concepts like the 'knowledge society' need to be re-thought? This question is all the more pertinent given that UNESCO is an educational organisation that creates environmental education (EE) policy, such as education for sustainable development (ESD), the discourse of which often espouses an interest in more ethical human-environment relationships.

If we were to 'image' humans' relationship to animals according to a visual-register, on the one hand, we demand non-opacity, or absolute visibility, when we wish to extract from nature, or know nature absolutely. On the other hand, however, we are content with opacity at the point of finitude (death), when no more needs to be known, or can be extracted — and recent debates about cameras onboard fishing vessels drift into this terrain (Manch 2020). Perhaps the disappearance of ~~Maersk Waterford~~ ~~Dana Hollandia~~ ~~Rahmeh~~ Gulf Livestock 1(GL1), described as 'one of the greatest maritime disasters of recent years', also drifts into this terrain (Buitendijk 2020).[5] The ship left port on 14 August, during the country's second lockdown, when only local people could travel to the port to protest or 'bear witness' to the existence of otherwise invisible lives, and the trauma such lives experience.[6] It was scheduled to arrive in the Port of Jingtang, Tangshan, China, on 3 September, but disappeared one-hundred nautical miles west of Amami Ōshima Island, southwest Japan, the day prior, almost three weeks after leaving New Zealand. Onboard were 43 crew (39 Filipinos, two New Zealanders and two Australians) and 5867 cows, a figure that is often 'rounded-up' to 5800 (cf ODT 2020). Search and rescue attempts were called off after eight days. Just five days after GL1 commenced its ill-fated journey, another livestock vessel the 'Yangtze Harmony', left Port Taranaki (New Zealand) carrying 5400 cows, whilst the 'Dareen' left Napier Port (New Zealand) eleven days later, carrying 7300 cows.

Our acceptance, indeed, cultivation, of opacity at the point of finitude comes into sharp relief when I try to imagine what inevitably ends up impossible: the conjuring of the chaos taking place, likely in the dark (the ship sent a distress signal at 1.40 am Japan Standard Time), as Typhoon Maysak bore down on GL1, somewhere in the Northwestern Pacific Ocean. There exists scant visual or other-sensorial record of the event to help do this: an Internet image search yields few images and just one of the animal tolls exacted (an image of a dead cow floating in the water).[7] But surely more than one of the 5867 bodies would have drifted into the path of search and rescue teams, and their cameras? What has prevented other images from finding their way online? The image of a cow, images of the orange canopy of a life-raft and a short video that begins with the arresting footage of the night-time rescue of Eduardo Sareno, the ship's chief officer, are about the sum of what I can locate online.[8] The video includes fragments of conversation between Sareno and the rescuers, all of whom wear masks to protect each other from the virus. From the viewer's point of view (and perhaps that of Sareno and rescuers?), the conversation competes with the engine's racket, giving a feel for what it must be like for animals on board a ship, so far removed from earth and soil.

Contrary to Blas's concerns regarding the deployment of surveillance technology to marginalise human others, of the all-knowing nature of technology, and UNESCO's (2005) forecasting of how future technology may be used to track the health, localisation and movements of animals, in this instance, technology fails to see, or perhaps even endeavour to see, the animal (to find the lost ship, and document and archive lost animal lives). Curiously, 'alt-text' frequently does not see the

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[5] The struck-out words are GL1's previous names before it became a livestock vessel. The names are written in this way to draw attention to conjecture surrounding the sea-worthiness of livestock vessels that were originally built as container ships, and often for short rather than deep-sea routes (Kevany 2020). It is also to draw attention to the apparent ease at which ships with previous functions are re-commissioned as live-export ships. Like the screen-shots included in this chapter (Figure 1) which record moments in journeys made by livestock vessels, the struck-out text is an expression of an aesthetic the logic of which is to work backwards. This aesthetic enacts a response-ability to the past in that it resists animal trauma being overwritten and rendered invisible.

[6] Bearing witness may involve documenting conditions, providing water to de-hydrated animals, talking to and touching animals in a bid to offer comfort and protesting with placards. In New Zealand, it is a nascent mode of protest / way to 'attend' to others (see https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/saturday/audio/2018777910/the-singing-vegan-animal-welfare-activist-sandra-kyle, accessed 20 January 2020). However, witnessing is more established elsewhere (see Scott-Reid (2020) and www.thesavemovement.org, accessed 20 January 2020).

[7] See https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/04/world/asia/cattle-ship-capsized.html (accessed 20 January 2020). Although I have only been able to retrieve one image from the Internet of the animal toll exacted, photographs of cows on board the ship in 2019 can be seen here: https://www.flickr.com/photos/136647212@N08/albums/72157715834521802 (accessed 20 January 2020).

[8] See https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/04/world/asia/cattle-ship-capsized.html (accessed 20 January 2020).

animal either, or at least, not when they are spent; when there is nothing left to be extracted.[9] Or perhaps it *does* see animals, but does so as inadequately as my attempt to imagine the chaos of the event: the description alt-text provides for the lone cow is 'a picture containing water, mammal, outdoor, blue'.

Prompted by the inadequacy of the existing visual archive documenting the loss of GL1, which would otherwise help imagine the event that took place, indeed to *mark it* as an event *that took place,* I purchase 'Marine Tracker', a $5.00 app that tracks ships via satellite. I buy the app as I want to find out what kind of visual information, if any, such an app can produce of a vessel that has vanished. However, since the live-export of 5867 cows only came to my attention after the ship carrying them vanished, on learning that another vessel, the 'Yangtze Fortune', is about to leave Portland, Australia, to pick-up a shipment of cows from Napier Port (the first after a brief suspension, imposed by the New Zealand government after the loss of GL1, has been lifted), I decide I need to attend more closely to the ethical problem that is live-export.[10] I therefore also purchase the app to track the Yangtze Fortune as it heads to New Zealand, and once it is 'loaded' and on its way to the next port. This 'tracking' is a type of micro/virtual protest, or mode of bearing witness, which involves virtually following a livestock vessel, as protesters sometimes do when following a truck. However, it is also a way to mourn GL1's disappearance, via a type of equivalency. To resist the invisibility of practices concerning the animal-industrial complex (as instantiated by the inadequacy of the image-archive documenting the animal toll exacted by the disappearance of GL1), I record this tracking via screenshots (see Figure 1).[11]

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[9] Alt text is written copy that serves three purposes. It appears in place of an image on a website, in case the image does not load, allows search engines to crawl and rank websites when Internet users search for content and helps screen-reading tools to describe images to readers with visual impairment (although perhaps not especially well).

[10] In fact, the ethical problem of live-export was only dimly present in my mind prior to the disappearance of GL1, hence also the exportation of live animals on the Yangtze Harmony, as well as the Dareen, just days after GL1 left New Zealand, also went under my radar. But whilst tracking the movement of the Yangtze Fortune, I became aware that another two ships were ploughing their way to New Zealand: the 'Ocean Drover' and 'Ocean Swagman'. That I only become aware of this whilst the ships were already in transit, and via an email from the organisation Save Animals from Exploitation (SAFE), requesting supporter action, is suggestive of a certain level of concealment of live-export practices in Aotearoa. As mentioned in the introduction, the visits by these two boats were not listed on PrimePort Timaru's website, something that Appelbe argues is representative of a more recent development in the country's practice of live-export (see Mohanlall 2019). On another note, the name 'Ocean Drover' says much about the industry's claim to farmed animal bodies; that the meat-industrial complex must forge ahead; must not be interrupted by something as alien to them as the ocean (drover is an Australian settler term for a person who moves animals over long distances, usually for 'market').

[11] 'HEAP', the title of a possibly impossible artwork herewith proposed, seeks to engage an aesthetic, ethic, and politic concerned with opacity, transparency and light. A laser-cutting machine will be commissioned to write hashtags such as #bringthemhome, #findmymate, #alleyesonNZ and #banliveexportNZ onto 5867 'ear-tags' (which will be re-cycled from cows that once had them pinned to their ears). The tags will then be assembled into a heap, and an industrial-strength torch will continually pass over it to project shadows of the jumbled-up phrases. Ideally, the ocean area where GL1 is thought to have sunk would 'host' the projection (the heap would therefore likely need to be smuggled onto a ship). This proposition will find its realisation when/if ship tracking apps have evolved to the extent that they can capture the kind of visual and temporally-specific information that the projection of these scattered phrases would represent. The artwork thus imagines entering into the data system of ship-tracking apps but generating an altogether different kind of information. The realisation of this artwork would also rely on torches being powerful enough, and atmospheric conditions sufficiently conducive to allow at least some phrases, or even letters, to be visible on the water. Less ambitious — perhaps more realisable — would be the projection of the phrases (in the real or via pre-filmed footage) onto public and private surfaces. Such surfaces could include livestock vessels docked in New Zealand ports, and buildings like 'Pastoral House' (the headquarters of New Zealand's Ministry for Primary Industries).
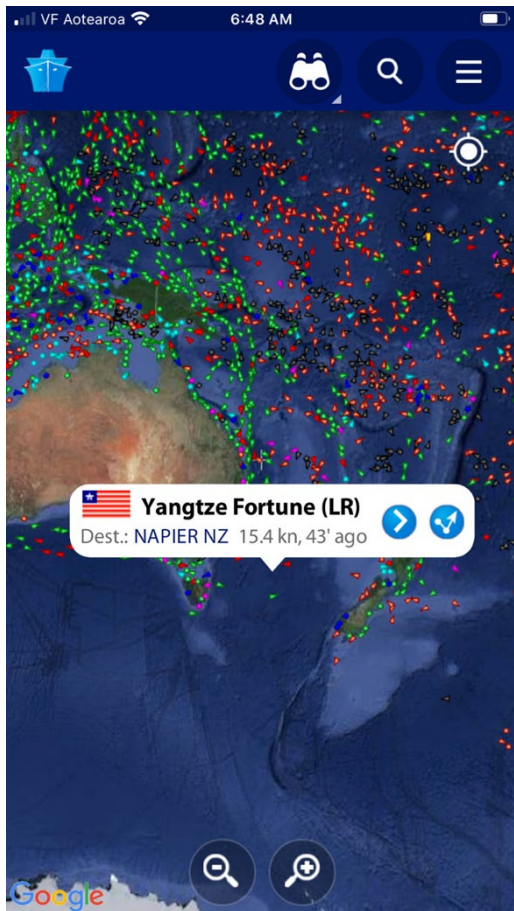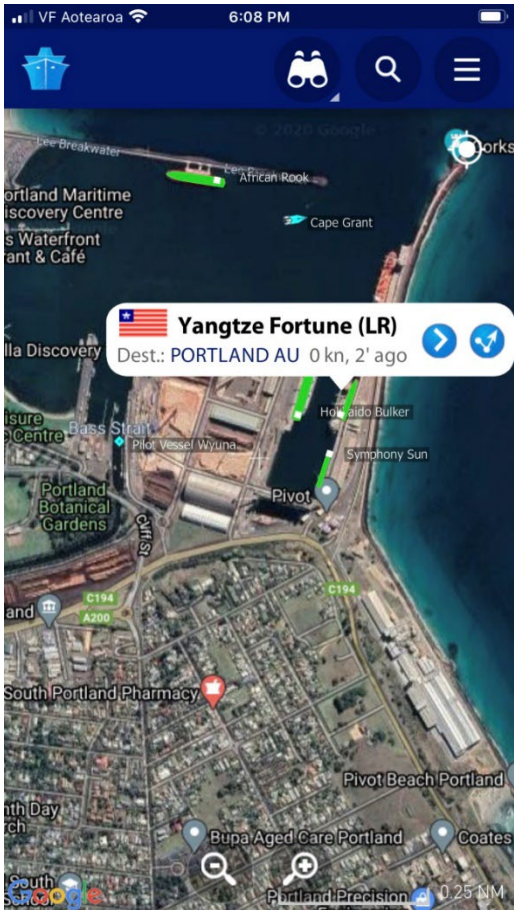
Figure 1: The locations of the 'Yangtze Fortune', as it makes its way from Portland, Australia, to Napier Port, New Zealand, between 31 October 2020 and 6 November 2020, according to the app 'Marine Tracker'. Screenshots: Victoria O'Sullivan

However, mourning via an app-assisted imaging/imagining of GL1's disappearance is rendered difficult because the slower speed of ships, as compared to planes, means that the app represents movement in a way that is less visually dynamic than that offered by equivalent 'flight radar' apps, thus thwarting my attempt to follow the vessels. On the app, each ship is represented by an arrow-type shape, whose progress through the water is only discernible when the user looks away from the screen and back again (if the fragmentary nature of everyday life does not make it challenging to remember to do so). In this sense, the app facilitates our 'turn away' from the event, instantiating the 'unprecedented looking away' that Haraway argues is the optic characteristic of our time:

> What is it to surrender the capacity to think? These times called the Anthropocene are times of multispecies, including human, urgency: of great mass death and extinction; of onrushing disasters, whose unpredictable specificities are foolishly taken as unknowability itself; of refusing to know and to cultivate the capacity of response-ability; of refusing to be present in and to onrushing catastrophe in time; of unprecedented looking away. (Haraway 2016: 35)

Despite the sophistication of maritime technology, which enables an ROV to map the ocean floor's depths during a pandemic, we have no trace of GL1; are clueless about what happened to it. Whilst this is also true of the disappearance of Malaysian Airways flight MH370, on 8 March 2014, after it is believed to have crashed into the Southern Indian Ocean, efforts mobilised to locate each craft register as strikingly different. Bremner (2015) describes the search, one that Cetina (2009: 65) might characterise as unfolding as a 'synthetic situation' which 'invariably includes, and may, in fact, be entirely constituted by, onscreen projections', accordingly: 'Looking for plane debris in the ocean began in outer space. It mobilised a vast array of satellites, floats, drifting buoys, data collection systems on ships, computer screens, imaging techniques, UN agencies and protocols, national agencies, and private companies.' (Bremner 2015: 201)

According to Bremner, the search thus manifested as a 'distant and invisible operation made situationally present around the globe through an extended sensorium of remote-sensing and screen-based technologies' (2015: 199). But the data produced by this scopic system 'did not merely presence the search', rather like the accumulative and exponential nature of social media 'dissemination structures' such as 'likes', 'shares', and 're-tweets' (Emmelheinz 2015: 136), it 'propelled … [the search] forward', giving it momentum (2015: 199). The argument is made tangible by Bremner's description of how amateur data analysts assisted the search:

> DigitalGlobe, the commercial US satellite operator, expanded its Tomnod crowdsourcing platform to engage the public in the search for the missing plane. Satellite imagery of the ocean's surface was uploaded to the Tomnod site; alerted on Facebook when new imagery was available, amateur data analysts were able to view it and tag potential signs of wreckage by dropping a pin onto a satellite map. A crowd-rank algorithm then identified overlaps in tagged locations before they were investigated by DigitalGlobe analysts. (Bremner 2015: 202)

According to Turpin, 'we have to wonder about the mental collateral damage', or 'psychotechnical vulnerability', that instances like the disappearance of MH370 produce (Turpin in Franke and Turpin 2015: 150). This vulnerability is a product of the fact that a plane, which is so 'carefully monitored and tracked' can go missing and is exacerbated by sophisticated technological systems' failure to locate it when it does. However, psychotechnical vulnerability is a pathology unlikely to emerge in the context of the search for GL1, which has unfolded seemingly outside of the scopic tracking-systems MH370 was/is enveloped within. Perhaps this is also true of the ship's actual disappearance (not just the search for it) depending on how closely livestock-vessels are monitored compared to commercial aircraft.

Whilst our lack of knowledge about what happened to MH370 and our inability to locate the aircraft is profoundly disturbing, it seems we are significantly less perturbed by the ship's disappearance and our cluelessness concerning what happened to it.[12] Like the single image of the animal toll exacted, the level of media attention to this tragedy has been underwhelming. According to Weekes (2020), disasters like the sinking of GL1 are a 'common but almost unreported occurrence worldwide'. Such ships, sometimes crewed by people paid as little as 90 cents per hour, 'disappear without the world paying much attention' (2020). Their disappearance results in the deaths of 'inappropriate/d others' (Haraway 1992; Minh-ha 1986). Such deaths often go unnoticed; instead, they are 'de-individualised as a mass death which is understood as collateral damage in the service of "higher" purposes such as profit, progress, colonisation, civilisation, scientific breakthrough, ideological purity, neoliberal mass consumption etc.' (Radomska, Mehrabi, and Lykke 2020: 93). Perhaps we could add maintenance of the 'animal-industrial complex' to this list (Noske 1989; Twine 2012).

I sensed this lack of attention on social media, too: on Twitter, amid partisan debates concerning quarantining and mask-wearing, and its intersection with seemingly ever-increasing waves of Covid-19 mis- or dis-information, this multispecies tragedy, and its impact on humans, terrestrial and marine animals, seemed to receive little attention and therefore generate little visibility (or vice-versa). This lack of visibility is obviously problematic given that under regimes of 'communicative capitalism', it is how images and signs accumulate value and/or power (Emmelheinz 2015). Scrolling down to the first time that #GulfLivestock1 is used, after entering this hashtag into the search bar, does not take long (this hashtag is the one most obviously connected to the event, at least in the English-speaking world). A tweet including it was first posted on 19 September, more than two weeks after the ship disappeared. Other tweets that include the hashtag, mainly posted by friends and family of lost crew undertaking individualised search missions by scanning ocean satellite imagery, conjoin people to support efforts to crowdsource the costs of more official ones, but garner little attention, attracting few 'likes' and 'retweets'. These 'do-it-yourself' style missions are obviously very different to the social-media facilitated ones, undertaken in the search for MH370.

However, the phenomenon that is the eclipsing of the GL1 tragedy by waves of tweets relating to Covid-19 crept up on me, and I failed to take 'field notes' of a phenomenon that unfolded before I entirely registered its significance (such as recording what other #tags were popular/trending at the time). Social-media users' actions – their use of 'dissemination structures', or engagement with a Tweet simply by clicking on it — yields 'data' that has spawned an industry that sells it at a cost that is prohibitive to individual researchers, and seems tailored to businesses that want to identify 'influencers' to help sell their products. Additionally, data more than 30 days old is apparently not retrievable (a bit like surveillance-camera data, or the ocean, which both 'overwrite' data/information unless it is 'reviewed' promptly).[13] I must remember to heed the advice given by Rutz et al., to scientists wanting to investigate how animals have responded to 'anthropause' (micro-pockets of Covid-19-induced human immobility), and take field-notes:

> We are confident that researchers will be keen to resume fieldwork, but recommend they take a few extra steps. First, we suggest they keep detailed records of official restrictions on (and where possible, observed changes in) human mobility in their study areas, as this information may be difficult to reconstruct after the fact. (Rutz et al. 2020: 158)

Writ large in fake news discourse are words that assume its antithesis, like 'truth'. But when did the media, or at least mainstream media, ever truthfully and comprehensively represent the concerns and perspectives of non-human animals? Hence, not specifically related to the mediated obfuscation of animal trauma during the pandemic, the Centre for Animal Ethics at the Universitat

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[12] Suffice to say that the loss of MH370 is profoundly disturbing for reasons greater than the fact that the search-mission 'undermines the aesthetic of a controlled system', and our confidence in systems we assume are failure-proof (Turpin in Franke and Turpin 2015: 15).

[13] However, one social-media data retrieval website that I consulted teased that data older than 30 days 'might' be retrievable, but it would only be possible to know on subscription to their service.

Pompeu Fabra recently published their 'Guidelines Towards an Ethical News Coverage of Non-Human Animals' (UPF-CAE 2020), aimed at journalists. A goal of the Guidelines is to:

> Unveil the speciesist power relations that legitimate the relationships of oppression imposed on other species due to the supposed superiority of the human species, which are structurally analogous to the oppressions we are already fighting against (sexism, racism, classism, homophobia, cultural discrimination, ableism, etc.). (UPF-CAE 2020: 4)

But fake news discourse does gift the possibility to think optically and visually. Therefore, this chapter's aesthetic, ethic, and politic affirms animals' 'right to opacity' (as subjects), simultaneous to their right to 'informatic visibility'. This does not mean that they should be subject to the gaze of technologies of a biometric kind, but that they should be subjects of media and political concern.

Conclusion

> Our minds are still racing back and forth, longing for a return to 'normality,' trying to stitch our future to our past and refusing to acknowledge the rupture. But the rupture exists. And in the midst of this terrible despair, it offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. (Roy 2020)

Many, including Arundhati Roy and Bruno Latour (2020), have asked how we might live differently come the end of the pandemic. Taylor and Fraser (2020b) have pondered this question hoping that we may develop a heightened sensitivity to our impact on other animals. If we imagined the animal-industrial complex as a component of the 'doomsday machine' (or even conflated the two), then one expression of this 'refusal' to acknowledge the rupture would be the rush to eat the flesh of another (a burger) after lockdowns began to be lifted. It is a phenomenon expressive of how the exploitation of animals and capitalism are linked if ever there was one. Perhaps the 'rupture' that the pandemic has brought into existence asks us to rethink the doomsday machine (or animal-industrial complex) and all other modes and sites of animal exploitation. But information practices constitutive of a type of 'anthropocentric noise disorder', which privileges humans' interests, renders the trauma of other animals invisible.

This chapter has explored some of the ways in which this disorder has manifested during the pandemic, as well as some ways to intervene. The practices that are constitutive of the disorder involve moments of misinformation that present themselves to us in the positive, but the condition that is the mediated omission, obscuration, obfuscation and eschewal of the interests, perspectives and experiences of non-human animals, as I have endeavoured to argue comes into play most notably in the instance of GL1, also contributes to untruthful information ecologies.

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