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**Silent Tails: Giving a Voice to the Voiceless: animal  
welfare in narrative literary journalism**

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**A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the  
degree of Master of Arts in Media Theory and Practice**

**Faculty of the Humanities**

**University of Cape Town**

**2009**

**This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree.**

**It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from  
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**Signature:** Signed by candidate

**Date:** 25/05/2009

## **Acknowledgements**

**This work could not have come together without the stories of three animal welfare organisations: SPCA, CHPA and Baboon Matters. I thank the people I interviewed for their patience and willingness to answer my every question.**

**Most importantly, I thank my supervisor, Lesley Marx whose gentle wisdom and openness proved invaluable in the creation of this project.**

**Abstract**

**This creative project offers three stories that explore the value and objectives of animal welfare using the genre of narrative literary journalism. The project required extensive fieldwork specific for each article, as well as the careful analysis of the style and history of narrative literary journalism. I have also written a short essay reflecting on the process of writing these articles which clarified for me the learning curve that I have experienced on this project.**

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## **Introduction**

**The creative project that you will find below is in two parts. The first presents three creative articles dealing with the challenges that animals welfare organisations face. The second part is a reflection on the process of gathering information through fieldwork, choosing a suitable genre and discussing this genre at length and lastly, a personal reflection on the problems encountered during the creative process.**

## **Blood and Rust**

We were sure of it. We both agreed it was time to adopt a dog. As fervent lovers of animals and strong believers in animal rights, adopting from the SPCA seemed the right way to bring an animal into our lives. And so on a sunny morning early in 2008, we entered the kennels to a cacophonous chorus of ecstatic canine greetings, each dog trying to call us over to its kennel. We enter Block F where all those dogs that have been assessed by an animal behaviourist and which are suitable for adoption are placed. There we find the dog we're sure will be ours: a small Jack Russell cross named Lucky who comes up to the wire mesh quietly wagging her tail and looking at us both with warm hazel-nut brown eyes.

Excitedly, we filled out the forms and were briefed by the adoption official named Kim. We could pick Lucky up by the end of the week after she had been sterilised, de-wormed and micro-chipped. By the Thursday, we had bought Lucky a bed, food and toys and looked forward to bringing her to her new home. That same morning I received a call from the SPCA: "Hello Bryony, this is Kim from the SPCA." The tone of her voice seemed more business-like than it had at the kennels a week ago. "We have some bad news. We found that Lucky has a severe heart murmur." My heart dropped in my chest: "Severe? What does that mean?" I asked, trying to understand what she was implying by telling me this. "It means that she is unlikely to live a normal life. You could take her, but the risk of her not making it is high and rather than you bond with her and then go through that loss, we needed to tell you." And with that, our anticipation of joy was replaced by that of regret, disappointment and even grief. Worst of all, I had to make a decision. Here was a dog that had spent the last few weeks of her life in a kennel where affection and attention were rarely given. To have her life end here seemed tragic, but as we were ourselves barely able to get by financially, and

would certainly be unable to afford large veterinary bills, I called Kim up and gave her the go-ahead to have Lucky put down.

Of course, I justified it to myself, choosing to hear Kim's reasoning. I thought of the poor quality of life Lucky would have, of the constant medication she'd need and so on. A few months later, out walking with my aunt and our dogs at Rondebosch Boys' High School fields, we bumped into a man who had a beautiful young Flat-coated Retriever. Instead of playing raucously with the other dogs, she lay down and played gently with Star, the dog we did adopt, who was bouncing around her, and with whom she was being surprisingly gentle.

Her owner explained to us that she suffered from a heart murmur and that her breeders had practically given her to him to get rid of her (and the ensuing vet bill, I imagine). She was on heavy medication, but had a reasonably good life he explained. I began to suspect that Lucky's previous owners knew of her condition, and as they were unable to afford treatment, they gave her up to the SPCA...without saying anything. The reason for handing her over is scrawled in her file: "moving to a small flat." But still, I wondered. The more I wondered, the more I realised that the SPCA is the place of the unwanted; the limbo of our animal counter-parts, those species that we consider to be less than human, as if to be human were in some way more than just being animal.

Over the ages animals have been reduced to mere distractions, entertainment if you will, in the eyes of the more evolved. Slowly, however, we are beginning to realise the consequences of not recognising our debt to the innocent. The future of our own species depends on our learning to be compassionate to those that are not able to adapt as easily to our man-made environments. In fact, it is the belief of those at this very organisation – the SPCA – that to teach people how to treat animals with respect will ultimately translate into the way we treat our own kind.

The SPCA serves as a halfway house for those animals that find themselves rejected by the people with whom they have had contact. Some will be given a second chance, almost as if sent back to a life they should have been allowed to live. Others will not know such happiness; these will face a green injection – the only kindness that humans may ever show them. Other animals may not be lucky enough to find their way to the SPCA. These are the doomed whose fate is often to suffer unspeakable pain and fear at the hands of those who should be caring for them.

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SPCA inspector Wayne Hector navigates his well-kitted van, with all its cages, injections and other equipment, to a plot in Zeekoei Vlei. Rusting pieces of metal and other machinery litter the dusty and pot-holed driveway. I hold onto my seat as the van lurches over this junk-afflicted zone, its diseased remnants of metal strewn about. We arrive at a warehouse where some version of panel-beating seems to take place and as we get out of the car, it would seem that the people around us keep a standard distance (about three metres at least) from us, as if they are wary of what the implications might be of brushing past us. We stand around while two ladies with brightly dyed hair and carefully manicured nails call the boss who has apparently summoned the SPCA's services to sort out one of his injured cows. That cows might live amidst piles of car parts and other junk seems incongruent, yet clearly possible. For the sake of our visit, it would seem that the cows have been banished to the plot adjoining this one, where they are expected to survive on the scraggly grass that attempts to grow, a poor improvement on living amidst rusting metal junk.

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We find out that two weeks ago a few young boys, *laaities* really, were amusing themselves amongst the junk piles. This is all we are told. I begin to imagine the scene. Perhaps these young boys were related in some way to the junk yard, or perhaps, as in so many areas in Cape Town, they weren't meant to be there. Perhaps they were frightening the cows with small crackers, throwing a lit cracker at the feet of one peacefully grazing cow, and then watching as the cracker burnt down its wick to the loud bang that erupted suddenly underneath her. Her eyes grow wild as she bulks to get away from the startling bang, jerking her back left leg into a sharp piece of rusting metal, severing the tendons. The blood trickles down her hoof, attracting flies to hum at the wound, settling on that open place where she is unable to flick them away with her tail. Soon, the infection they bring will sap the energy from her and she will lie helplessly amongst the junk that has abetted the grave harm done her by the boys.

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The boss arrives in his gleaming black Suzuki double-cab. He gets out and swaggers over to us with an air of self-importance as he introduces himself to Hector and begins to explain, in Afrikaans, why he has called us out. I wonder to myself why he has taken two weeks to do so. Why didn't this man call someone before then to sort it out? Since then, the cow has become sickly and lies all day in a makeshift pen. He takes us to her and there she is emaciated, listless in her pen of rusting corrugated iron, the floor strewn with her faeces, a small bucket in front of her with dirty water for her to drink. Her big brown eyes tell a sad story and her leg, the one that was injured by one of these unaccountable young boys, is inflamed to five times its size – a stump where once there was a dainty hoof. The flies settle on her foot and she turns weakly to nose them away.

“This one is not going to survive,” Hector says, taking one look at the heifer. “Cows and horses need to stand in order to digest their food properly and she hasn’t stood for two weeks. Look at her, she is nothing but skin and bones.” From her spine, her ribs protrude sickly through her cream-coloured hide. Her neck is long and scrawny and drooping, barely able to keep her head up. As the boss has gone off talking loudly on his cell- phone, showing little concern for the pain this cow must be in, Hector looks again at the cow and then gestures for me to come with him, back to the van. The boss has finished his loud cell- phone conversation and walks back with us. Hector begins in a non-negotiable tone of voice, “Sir, I am going to put this cow out of its misery.” The boss wants to know if the meat will be any good. “If you had called us earlier to inspect this, the meat would have been fine, but now that she has sat here for two weeks not being able to eat or drink, she has nothing to offer. You will need to call the municipality to remove the carcass.” The boss seems annoyed at this.

A small, polite and extremely shy man in his mid-thirties, Hector has been working at the SPCA Inspectorate division for two years. In that time, he has become well-respected as a hard worker and is considered one of the best inspectors because of his ability to understand the people he encounters on a daily basis. I admire his patience with the way the boss is treating this situation. But when the boss leaves to fetch someone, Hector shows some of his frustration for having to euthanise the animal. According to him, this is a chargeable offence. “This could have been avoided. These people have bought cows for the sake of having some, but this isn’t the right environment for these animals, the chances of them injuring themselves here are good.” Shaking his head sadly, he walks back to the van to fetch the instruments he’ll need.

At first, I assume that he will be injecting her, but soon find out that I am somewhat mistaken. Out of a shiny silver box, Hector slides a butcher’s knife and a stun gun. “This is the most humane way to kill a cow or horse,” he says, looking up anxiously at me. He asks whether I want to stick around

for this part. I say that I do, although my hands are starting to prickle with sweat and my stomach contracts involuntarily, my body filling with adrenaline. But I stand firm, a part of me fascinated to see this terrible act. I begin to reason through my fears and the disgust I feel at my urge to remain here watching. She is dying anyway, I think to myself. There is no way that this poor creature will be able to be rehabilitated. No chance of her ever being able to roam freely, chewing her cud and flicking flies lazily with her ears and tail.

Hector wipes the blade and then begins to sharpen it. Slow, steady strokes over the oilstone. The cow lies in her spot watching. She gives a resigned sigh. She will go today and that will have been her life on this earth. The two ladies from the office, the boss and a couple of men in grease-covered overalls come to loiter nearby too to see the end of the cow with the gangrenous leg. It seems as if this is just a sideshow to them, a diversion in their day.

Hector loads the stun gun with a single silver bullet which he explains he will shoot into her forehead at a certain point. This will lodge in her brain and should keep her unconscious long enough for him to slit her throat without her feeling a thing. "I only have sixty seconds from the time that I shoot to slit her throat, so it's a quick process. Don't be alarmed, ok?" I nod mutely and hold my breath, preparing myself for this horror. He has placed the gun and knife next to the cow who seems interested in what he's doing. She looks at him gently with her brown, trusting eyes, sniffing at his uniform. He picks up the stun gun and reaches for her head. Placidly, weakly, she lets him take hold of her. He finds the spot on her forehead, rests the gun there and as he sucks a short breath of air into his lungs he pulls the trigger. It's a loud shot, her head recoils slightly from the force and suddenly she is limp. Wayne drops the gun and reaches for the knife. With his left hand he holds her head up, exposing her jugular. Now he hacks and the blood begins to gush. It is gory but glorious in the same breath. I see her spirit ebb with the tides of blood that seem to wash out of her,

as foamy as the lapping waves on a sandy beach. She lies, gash exposed to the sun, her limbs contracting, spasming as her muscles try to pump the blood that is flowing away. A leg pulls up under her body, ghostly, haunting. But she is gone.

It would be appropriate to say that we left this place with the haunting visions of injustice, but this was not so. Hector had more calls to make and had done this on many occasions. A standard practice for qualified SPCA inspectors. I am sure they will agree that this standard practice occurs too often. Hector steps back, his knife wet with the blood from her neck. He is breathing hard from the effort, wiping the blade clean at first on the floor next to this death scene and then washing the blade in the bucket of water left there next to her. He dries it carefully on a piece of rag and places the blade and the gun back in the silver suitcase, loudly clipping the case shut, an official, final sound. He steps back to where I am standing and together we watch the dead cow and the reaction of the small crowd that has now gathered there as the blood changes from a pink foamy texture to deep crimson. The ladies hold their neon nails to their lips, staring aghast. The boss has taken another call, and the few men in overalls talk quietly amongst themselves, gesturing at the cow.

It is time to trudge back to the car dodging pieces of car and broken glass. Hector takes the boss aside to find out how many other cows he has. He discusses this in Afrikaans with the boss and then comes back to where I wait near the truck. Opening the driver's side, he takes out a couple of forms and a pen and gets the boss to sign them. As we are leaving, two black BMWs pull up outside the office. Bass from the loud music in one of the cars vibrates through the ground and up from the soles of my feet into my legs. Four doors open in unison like wings on a gleaming black pterodactyl, and out step a couple of well-dressed young men who walk jauntily to the office, glancing at us over their shoulders. The treatment of the cows is only a small aspect of what must go on here.

I am silent for a moment, shocked at what I have seen. Hector looks at me as we drive off and starts to recount what he has told the boss about the rest of the cows. Since Hector isn't the livestock inspector, he will need to get the appropriate inspector to visit this place. He has also given the boss instructions on how to improve the living area for the cows. Fresh water, an enclosed area and more nutritious food than just the grass in the area will go a long way to improve their present circumstances. And then he amazes me. After all the injustices he has seen, Hector is still able to see the person as someone to be respected, given the benefit of the doubt. 'Educate before you prosecute' is the organisation's motto and one that Hector believes gives people the chance they need to learn to become more compassionate. "People need to be taught how to treat animals. Maybe if they learn how to treat animals better, then they will treat people better," Hector spells out the SPCA's philosophy. I look out the window at the decaying streets – paint peels; empty packets roll lazily in the wind like makeshift dust wheels.

The Cape of Good Hope SPCA deals with in excess of 8000 cases of cruelty a year. These range from cases of extreme atrocities to those where the owner simply cannot afford to keep their animal anymore. Using the Animal Protection Act as the main law under which to prosecute, the SPCA has managed to win many cases in which outright cruelty has been committed. Unfortunately, the Act still defines animals as things that can be owned and this makes it difficult to prosecute. "Animals are owned just like you own a piece of furniture and unfortunately, if it is your property, then you can choose to treat it any way you want to," Hector comments.

"When it comes to how a person looks after an animal, it doesn't matter whether that person earns a lot of money. I met a bergie once who had two dogs. Those dogs were the happiest dogs that I've ever seen even though they didn't have a proper place to live because they were with their owner all the time. Like a pack, you know?" Hector tries to explain the proper care of an animal. "Those two

dogs are a lot better off than if they lived with a lawyer who could afford all the special treats and luxury toys in the world, but who is never at home. You don't need a lot to look after your pet properly. It's all about paying attention to your animal, making sure that they are happy all round. Not just fed or warm, they must also have contact with you as often as possible.”

In Brooklyn we call at a house with a sad looking Pit-bull chained to a heavy-duty chain that seems to drag even this strong dog's neck down. I hear his name is Prince and when I approach him, he wags his tail good-naturedly. Wayne knocks on the door of the house to see whether Prince's owner is in. Apparently, this is the second time Wayne is calling. The first time he was here, he instructed Prince's owner to erect a higher wall to let Prince roam freely in the yard. Having given them two weeks to make a plan, he is now following up to make sure that they have made the necessary improvements.

Seeing the dog still chained, Hector whistles and shakes his head in disbelief. He understands the difficulties that the people in this situation have, but must also ensure that the dog is safe and well looked after. The sun beats down and in the distance Table Mountain rears up mightily against the blue sky. Yet its presence is inconsequential here as Prince sits panting in the dirt in front of a dilapidated house. It is school holidays and a couple of raggedy boys about ten years old and clearly in hand-me-down clothes – a washed out Spiderman t-shirt, a pair of jeans that need to be jerked up into place once in a while – come up to see what the SPCA van is doing here. The boy with the Spiderman t-shirt asks, “Are you taking that dog away?” I answer that Prince needs to be let loose because it is cruel to have him tied up in the sun all day. “But that dog can easily jump this wall. I've seen him do it,” says the boy.

Hector comes back to the van, “No, Prince’s owner isn’t here. He’s gone to live somewhere else. These guys are just looking after Prince until the guy can find a place for him to live. It looks like I’ll have to take Prince.” A young woman comes out of the house, holding an infant wrapped in a yellow blanket, “I don’t know what the story is with Prince. My husband agreed to help this guy out while he was finding a place to stay, I don’t want Prince around because of the baby. He’s too dirty.” Prince wags his tail at this, straining to say hello to us. “Ok, here is my card. Please give this to your husband for Prince’s owner. Tell him that I will have to take the dog if nothing is sorted out,” Hector tells the young mother.

The boys are leaning against the gate watching as we say our goodbye and start climbing into the van. Spiderman boy asks me what the SPCA does and I try in my stumbling manner to answer him, “The SPCA protects animals and makes sure that humans look after them properly.” “But what about people? People need to be looked after more,” is his reply. No doubt he has a point..

### **Cash horse**

“Collecting junk, spare junk!” A dilapidated cart drawn by a brown donkey comes slowly around the corner and down a sleepy street in a small suburb of Cape Town. The donkey’s hooves set an even rhythm which the driver uses to call out his message to the closed-up houses. “Junk, metal junk, any junk!” He waits for the donkey’s clippity-clop rhythm and in time with the ‘clip’, he calls again with a crescendo on the last ‘junk’.

With once bright red paint peeling off ancient wooden slats that serve as the loading area and the rubber car tyres serving in place of what must have once been spoked wheels, this man and his donkey will cover a large area of Cape Town’s southern suburbs in search of metal junk that he will trade for cash at a scrap yard.

### **Headquarters and heritage**

Amidst the cement and tarred Mordor of Epping 2 where the menacing roar of huge pantechnicons driving by is a constant and rhythmic shudder, lives a quiet remnant of the past. Its load heavy with scrap metal, it trots past the vast puddles of oily pollutants that shimmer a metallic rainbow in the watery sunlight of Cape Town’s mid-winter weather to trade its load for much-needed cash. This place is as hospitable to horse and cart as it is to the stray and mange-ridden dog that cowers close to a fence that towers above it. Giant warehouses loom lifelessly over the streets in uniform colours; in dull blues, greys and whites, they are an army out to war in the name of industry and it is only for industry that such a place as this cares. It is no surprise then that an animal welfare organisation, unique to this part of the country, has its offices situated here too. Monitoring the treatment of a

Cape Flats phenomenon, still existing in the new millennium, the Cart Horse Protection Association or CHPA, has its work cut out for it. With 455 registered cart horses to 188 owners, the association is constantly kept busy with a variety of issues surrounding the treatment of the horses.

Sitting at the round wooden table in her office, Dee Terblanche, General Manager of the Cart Horse Protection Association, explains the difference between animal welfare and animal rights activism. Welfares accept that certain animals are domesticated and are in contact with human beings throughout their lives. This said, welfare organisations ensure that these animals are looked after properly by educating people and policing their treatment of these animals. Animal rights activists, on the other hand, fight to ensure that animals have legislation protecting them from human abuse and in some cases, even from human contact.

“Humans will always work with horses, it’s up to welfares like CHPA to monitor and regulate the treatment of these horses to ensure that they are not abused,” Terblanche explains. The CHPA was created in association with other welfares in 1995 to cover the gap that was not being filled – dealing with the cart horse fraternity within the townships.

The lives of this fraternity have been shaped by adapting to whatever circumstances they find themselves in, surviving as best they can with what they’ve been given, and so it happens that over the ages these circumstances have become heritage. Their own horses and foals have been handed down to them by their parents, siblings or friends through the generations. Logically, perhaps, one would expect this group to have moved on to using mechanical means of transport, yet when one considers the general expense of keeping a car in working condition, owning a horse on the Cape Flats is a more viable option. The horses are known to be able to withstand harsh weather conditions and owners have made do with what’s available to feed and care for them.

This culture of horsemanship is at best ill-informed, in desperate need of aid in order for both horses and owners to thrive. The horses on the Cape Flats are hard-working, yet are often overworked and not properly cared for because of lack of knowledge among the families that own them. The CHPA inspectors tell of how often they've had to deal with colic due to the owners trying to skimp on proper equine feed and, instead, give their charges cheaper bovine feed. Colic is brought on by the animal's inability to digest food they have consumed and its symptoms are acute spasms in the digestive tract. Since a horse's digestive system is very delicate, colic is a constant risk. Chief Inspector Diana Trufter explains that a horse may get down onto its back and writhe, trying to rid itself of the pain in its gut. Yet this can be fatal since the writhing can cause the affected gut to swing over itself in a fatal knot, completely blocking the animal's digestive tract. Though a horse may be operated on in order to untwist the intestine, it is both costly and highly risky, making this an almost impossible option for cart horses who suffer from the condition.

The CHPA attempts to prevent such conditions by educating owners on how to avoid colic and by introducing subsidised feed for those cart-horse owners and drivers who belong to the association. Yet still there are cases of colic in the community. One Friday in August a chestnut-brown horse is confiscated from one cart for this reason. The horse was fed bovine food and has suffered from colic for the past week as a result. The inspectors have been anxious about whether the horse will try to get down onto its back and writhe in an effort to rid itself of the chronic stomach cramps. They have taken it in turns to watch the horse round the clock to make sure that they can stop it from doing this. Today, after a careful inspection from the younger inspectors and a final inspection from Trufter, the horse is given a clean bill of health, with the main decision hinging on whether or not the horse has satisfactorily passed faeces. Thankfully, the horse has managed to pass dung overnight

and is ready to be fetched by its owner. Trufter speaks to the owner sternly when he arrives, his two young boys in tow.

### **Women at work**

The CHPA inspectorate is made up of women who work in an industry predominantly populated by men. Known as 'carties', these men are entrenched in a patriarchal culture, making the success of the CHPA dependent on delicate relationships and good negotiation skills on the part of the inspectors. Yet these women in their official navy blue trousers and white-buttoned blouses are united, a formidable and unshakeable strength. They're determined, strong and passionate about their work.

"I believe that the CHPA is successful because it deals with the forgotten people of the Cape. It is pro the people living on the flats in the Cape," Terblanche says. "We are all aware that it's dangerous to go out there alone but we don't think about it that way."

The inspectors have stood up to all kinds of threats – murder, rape, you name it. Yet, the men they encounter know that these women should not be underestimated. CHPA has been around for thirteen years and has refused to react to intimidation by stopping its work. Sitting at that round table and sipping her lukewarm coffee, Terblanche tells of a former CHPA inspector who had to wear a heavy bullet-proof vest during the scorching summer of 2007. Having received death threats from angry carties, former CHPA inspector Sue Mutch needed to take some precaution in order to continue her work. Nevertheless, she was there every day doing her rounds in the townships. Carrying the knowledge that something could happen at any moment, the inspectors continue their work. The group took a self-defence course in 2006 which Terblanche is not sure was that useful: "We're in a

situation where if anything is ever going to happen to you it's going to happen before you can even blink. You can't prepare, you can't do anything."

Terblanche knows that the dangers are there and that her inspectors put themselves at risk. "I will never tell them to do anything that I wouldn't do myself," she says, referring to the inspectors. "The passion and emotion of what you are doing overrides everything else. They get nervous sometimes. And also, I think it's good to understand that these girls do what they do because they want to do it."

And yet, there is some measure of protection to be had through the relationships that the inspectors have built with the carties over the years. It is this that finally allows these white women to do their work for the people living on the Cape Flats. "The guys in this industry, they will phone and say don't go into Netreg today they're shooting and you're going to get caught in the middle of it, don't come in. So there is a lot of communication. Diana has built that over the years," Terblanche explains, speaking of Chief Inspector Trufter. "We're actually safer in some respects than most people because the respect is there and people know us, so if you drive in the bakkie, into Netreg or Valhalla – I mean, those are big gang areas – people wave and smile and laugh and joke."

Showing a fist, Terblanche goes on to explain that dealing with the carties in an uncompromising way is not an effective way to earn their respect. Instead, the inspectors or 'the girls' as Terblanche calls them, act transparently and give reasons to the carties when they prosecute them. "We give you a warning: 'Here we're going to help you, we're going to sort out your problems. Come, your horse needs shoeing'," Terblanche plays out a typical scenario. The inspectors sign a horse off, meaning that the horse shouldn't be working until it is given a clean bill of health by the inspector. She continues to play out the scenario: "I know you can't earn any money that way, so I'll sign you back on the road again but you must work slowly." The inspectors remain sensitive to the fact that

the carties need to saddle up every day in order to bring in some money and so they try to reason with them from this point of view. "It's this whole education-communication thing. That is what has enabled us to do what we do now."

Terblanche's passion for her work is evident in the way she speaks of the CHPA. Her work consists of ensuring that the Association is run smoothly, but she is also involved with broader societal issues that need to be addressed, such as proposing new by-laws for equine traffic on public roads in the Western Cape which have been incorporated into the new animal by-laws. Her work has also seen the Association being officially granted 'Flashing lights and Sirens' for their emergency response vehicles by the Department of Transport and Public Works. She continues to fight for more authority on behalf of animal welfare inspectors with the aim of eventually winning them the recognition of 'Authorised Official' which would enable all qualified animal welfare inspectors to enforce laws with the full authority of government officials.

On another Friday, standing outside in the brief sunlight, Terblanche lights a cigarette and takes a long and thoughtful drag before saying that she has been working at educating the many cart- horse owners in the Cape Flats area for over three years. A small woman in her forties, her blonde fringe getting in her eyes and her glasses an almost permanent feature on her face, she has always been involved in careers that give back to the community. Starting off as a House Mother for a half-way home for children in England, studying to be a nurse and then moving towards working with horses, she feels she has come full circle from her first job as a House Mother to her job now as the General Manager at the CHPA. Describing herself as a radiator, she speaks of spending her whole life looking for the right thing to settle down and do, feeling that the few years that she has spent at the CHPA represents her arriving after that long journey to know exactly what it is she needs to do. As she stands there, it is her strength and determination that seem to radiate from her giving the

compassion she has for others richness and value. Her relationship with each staff member is personal and weighted by a faithfulness and honesty that is essential for a job in the welfare industry. Each employee, as well as Terblanche herself, invests much of herself in their work. This is why they share a strong bond.

### **On the road**

Gangs on the Cape Flats have a complex socio-political history, stemming from the apartheid geography that forced removals of communities from areas designated whites-only. From Terblanche's point of view, gangsterism on the Cape Flats wasn't always as violent as it is today. Formed to provide a sense of belonging and identification for those people who, as Terblanche so aptly puts it, are the forgotten people of the Cape, the gangs of the Cape Flats were born out of the need to provide self-protection. As the gangs grew in numbers, so they became increasingly territorial, mostly due to competitive retailing, beginning with the sale of vegetables on the roadside and, perhaps inevitably, culminating in the trading of drugs. As a resident of the Cape Flats, Terblanche explains to me, it is essential to become a member of a gang to ensure your protection and survival.

To be a gang member does not require one to take part in the activities of the gang but rather simply to pick a side to support and be protected by. Many of the cart-horse owners that the CHPA deal with are themselves gang members and will often call the inspectors if they know of a shooting happening in certain areas.

“You must understand where these guys come from and what they do. We know where these guys live; we know where all the horses are. Diana has been here seven plus years. Diana is Afrikaans.

She has the biggest heart in the world and the biggest passion for horses. She's the kindest, most gentle and generous person. But if you cross her," Terblanche says, holding up a warning hand, "And to many of these guys' unfortunate experiences they've learnt what Diana will do to them and that is where the respect comes from."

Her first name pronounced 'Dee-aana', Trufter comes from a well-to-do farming family in the Western Cape. Coming from a genteel farming background, she explains that her career choice is somewhat unexpected. Yet, she feels that her experiences in her job enrich her life, showing her an aspect of reality that she would not otherwise have seen. In the almost eight years that Trufter has worked as an inspector she has developed a close rapport with the people in the townships. Sitting in her bakkie, Trufter looks ahead at the road and says that she has experienced things that her family might never understand.

I listen to Trufter whilst moving aside various odds and ends that litter the passenger seat in order to get comfortable. The legroom is a morass of sweet wrappers, now joined by the few horsey instruments I have placed there in order to find my seat. It is chaotic, but indicative of the amount of time spent within this small space.

We're off to move one cart horse, that was in a motor vehicle accident two nights ago, from the SPCA stables to the Blue Cross stables in Newlands. And from there, we'll be visiting Hout Bay (which she pronounces in the Afrikaans way – 'Hout Baai') to see a horse whose hoof needs some attention.

## **Simba**

Trufter climbs into the driver's seat after a lengthy discussion with the other inspectors. Along with her inspector uniform, Trufter's cropped, ash blonde hair and large, strong hands contribute to her authoritative appearance. I notice that the whole team smokes. Trufter's choice, Malboro Reds, are nestled comfortably in the middle console of her bakkie. She ignores them for the first part of our journey, focused on the task at hand: to get injured Simba to a capable vet. The dapple grey was hit by a car two nights ago. Simba is one of a few cart horses owned by Salim John who rents out the horses to other men without managing the treatment or condition in which his horses are kept. The man to whom Simba was currently being rented had at last started getting Simba's health up to scratch, and the horse was looking stronger than ever, so when CHPA heard that Simba had been in a motor vehicle accident (called an MVA by the inspectors), they were all devastated. Earlier that morning I had stood with Terblanche and another inspector, KK, while they had a coffee and smoke outside the cavernous warehouse headquarters. KK was filling Terblanche in on the last day's events. Hearing what happened to Simba, Terblanche broke down, tears falling, thoroughly disappointed and frustrated for the men who had given so much care to the animal. KK put an arm around Terblanche and comforted her quietly.

It has begun to rain silently as we pull into the SPCA's stables in Grassy Park, fitting weather for the terrible state of the horse we are about to see. Parking the bakkie so that the horse trailer faces toward the stable, we climb out of the van and introduce ourselves to the SPCA caretakers. The stables are in good condition and only two horses are being kept there: a tall chestnut brown stands calmly in an open pen outside, probably waiting for his stable to be mucked out, and Simba, who hides in the shadow of his stable. He looks dazed, hanging his head woefully, with mane falling limply down. At first, the horse looks fine – no visible scratches, but as he turns his head, there on

his left cheek is a violent gash that extends for more than ten centimetres. It must have missed his vital arteries by mere millimetres. It looks extremely painful, but he is lucky. If he had broken any limbs, he would have had to be put down.

We need to load him in the horse box but realise that he will be extremely uncomfortable with such a bumpy ride. The challenge of coaxing a cart horse, not used to being confined for long periods of time, into such a small space is left up to Trufter. Thankfully, it seems the amount of painkillers Simba has been given has made him rather dozy, making loading him an easy exercise – it takes only two tries. On the first attempt he balks at the path up the ramp. Wisely, Trufter doesn't force him up. Instead, she leads him back down, turning him around to try again. This time, he goes in without resisting. He seems quite comfortable and Trufter makes sure that he is well tethered at the front of the box so that he can't move his head around too much and hurt himself. We close up and head off to Newlands very slowly, orange emergency lights flashing. Trufter tries to make the ride as smooth as possible for Simba at the back. "I've ridden many times in one of those things and it's a bloody bumpy ride. We've got to try make it as smooth as possible for Simba," she comments.

The narrow streets of Newlands offer some difficulty for manoeuvring a horse box and bakkie. Finally we arrive outside the Blue Cross Veterinary Hospital and travel down a narrow pan-handle driveway, inches from the wall on either side. Coming to the end of the narrow corridor, there opens in front of us a large back yard with a few stables all backing onto the Liesbeeck River. Certainly an unexpected amount of space when one looks at the front of the building.

Climbing out of the vehicle first, Trufter goes to meet a man who stands with four others around the right hock of a gorgeous warm-blood, also a dapple grey that is in for assessment before he is sold. Two veterinary students are taking an x-ray of the horse's hock, playing around with some high-tech

equipment at the instruction of a loud, passionate man wearing jeans and a blue-checked short-sleeved shirt and who must be the man to whom Trufter wants to speak. His mannerisms are excited as he walks to the x-ray machine and then back to the computer that has been set up against a wall of the stables. We watch the proceedings for a while, until a groom comes up and says that we can offload Simba into one of the well-kept stables. It's not common behaviour for a horse to walk backward and often it is difficult to back them out of a horse box, especially if, like Simba, they are not used to riding in one. The stable-hands and Diana have had a lot of experience with this though and they have Simba out of there in no time. His eyes give a little roll, but otherwise he doesn't protest much.

Colin Starfield, the excitable man who was giving instructions at the x-ray machine, comes to see Simba and marvels at the horse's wounds, poking the raw and exposed flesh in fascination. My stomach turns a little as blood begins to seep from where Starfield has aggravated the wound. Simba rolls his eyes so that the whites show and turns his ears back showing that this invasive examination is painful.

Luckily for Simba, Starfield's examination is interrupted when his phone rings in his top pocket. He turns to me, the closest person to him, with bloodied hands held up and away from his clothes and asks me to retrieve the cell phone from his breast pocket and answer it. As I'm about to ask the caller to phone back, Starfield gestures to me to hold the phone to his ear. This awkward but good-natured confusion seems natural to Starfield who happily stands with his ear against the phone talking at the top of his voice. Soon though, he gives up on this arrangement and makes the decision to take the cell phone in his bloodied hand.

Once he has finished talking on his cell phone, he gestures to me to follow him to his car. There in his boot he carries a stash of all types of medication and medical equipment that he uses to treat the horses. He takes two vials out of a plastic tool case. One, he explains is an antibiotic to help Simba fight off any infections in the wound, while the other contains an analgesic to help the horse cope with the pain. He takes two syringes out of their packets and with a flick of his wrist he turns the vials over, inserting the needle of the syringe into them and sucks the contents of each vial up into the syringe. He is equally familiar with administering the drugs to the horse, darting them quickly into Simba's neck and pushing the liquid into the horse's blood stream. Simba doesn't flinch at all.

Trufter leaves Simba in the care of Starfield who will see to it that the horse gets the right medical attention in the next few days. We get back into the bakkie to make our next call, in 'Hout Baai'.

But instead of taking the road to the area which is situated on the opposite side of the mountain from where we are, Trufter steers the bakkie away from what I believe to be our next stop, leaving behind the stately white walls and old, green trees of Newlands and joining Klipfontein Road that soon begins to open out into corrugated iron roofs and giant concrete slabs that have a mess of obscenities spray-painted across them. I begin to suspect that the Hout Bay that I know isn't in fact the one that Trufter is talking about, since we're heading in the opposite direction. Not sure whether Trufter is confused, I finally pluck up the courage to ask her whether she has decided not to go to Hout Bay.

With a glint of mischief in her eye and a smile, Trufter finally says, "I was wondering when you were going to say something." She explains that 'Hout Baai' is the name of a horse that one of the carties owns. We have to go into Netreg in Bonteheuwel to visit the horse and its owner.

Bonteheuwel is the Association's main operating area since the majority of the carties live here.

Trufter talks of how the horses often change hands amongst the different carties for various reasons.

Sometimes it will be to pay off a debt. Other times, a widow might sell a horse because she can't

look after it on her own. The horses are renamed as often as they change hands. For example, a horse Trufter might recognise as Blommetjie, may in fact have been renamed Tiger from one visit to the next.

Trufter and I wonder why it is that the horses are renamed each time they pass into another's hands, in contrast to the more established world of horseracing, where horses pass hands possibly even more regularly, yet name changes are a rare thing. Perhaps this practice of changing names is a way for the new owner to claim complete ownership over the animal, giving it an identity and place in its new home. This idea of claiming the horse as their own by renaming them is a fascinating class issue, one that goes far deeper because of a history of Apartheid. Its impact is evident on the Cape Flats – even through the small industry of cart horses.

We drive deeper into Bonteheuwel. The streets become narrower and the litter gathers together conspiratorially. A few chip packets and a scraggly piece of black dustbin bag skip off in the wind to hug the diamond wire fencing that runs along one house border. The houses are a mismatch of corrugated iron add-ons, plastic sheeting and small, crudely finished brick structures. Any material that can be used to stop the holes in the roofs, or create more living space in some way, has been used.

Dogs, cats and fowl run freely in the streets. Puppies lie panting in the sun on the curbside. A little black dog trots purposefully around a corner. "Get used to it, there are animals everywhere around here," Trufter remarks, seeing me looking at the dog as we pass. She is right. Chickens scratch busily in the sand that has been left by some storm stream on the side of the road. Young children run around amongst these animals, playing in the streets. We come to a stop at one house and three little girls, not older than six, stand on the side of the road and give us their rendition of a song

they've learnt somewhere. Toothless grins and hair tied tightly back into little pigtails and plaits, they are the epitome of impishness.

While the little girls sing their song to me through the window, Trufter climbs out of the van and from behind one of the houses comes a man leading the smallest horse I've ever seen. It must be a mix of Shetland pony, the smallest breed of horse in the world. Its carefully brushed mane is almost as long as its short legs and the colour of fresh cream, while its winter coat curls from the recent wash it was given -- probably in anticipation of Trufter's visit. This is Hout Baai, the horse I have been thinking of as an area of Cape Town. His attentive owner has taken great care with this little pony and now turns to Trufter to discuss the horse's injured hoof. "It has a cut just inside the hoof that's giving it trouble. It's a common problem because they're walking on tar where there is a lot of litter and stones, so they often get nicks and cuts in their feet," Trufter explains to me.

A crowd gathers around us while Trufter inspects the horse's hoof and talks to the owner. A boy in his twenties, wearing his thobe, the traditional Islamic dress, with his red Puma shoes poking out at the bottom, asks me if I'm an inspector. He is genuinely interested in why I am not in uniform. I imagine that white girls are not frequent visitors to these parts.

Hout Baai seems fine. Trufter examines his hoof, and gives his carer a tonic and instructions. We say our goodbyes and climb back into the vehicle where Trufter records her visit on a chart. Her way with the people in these areas is familiar. She looks quite at home here. On our way through the small, makeshift suburb, we stop in at a family who become very excited at the sight of the CHPA van. Earlier, Trufter had told me of this family and their horses. Today is the day that she will be bringing back the family's mare and young foal that the CHPA have been caring for in the first few weeks of the foal's life. It is the family's first foal to survive after a series of tragedies in the family.

Sadly, the father of the family was involved in a fatal collision with a car whilst out with his cart and horse, at a busy intersection nearby. The birth of the foal, so Trufter tells me, represents so much to the family in their remembrance of their father. I think back to the conversation in Terblanche's office a few weeks ago when she mentioned her fight for by-laws to be put in place around carts on public roads. Her fight for these laws is for the well-being and safety of all concerned on the road, most importantly, the carties and their horses that brave the busy traffic each day. Trufter takes me to meet one of the well-respected men in Netreg, Mr Eddie Bremer, who has fought alongside the CHPA for the safety of the cart horses and their owners in the area.

Our exit from Netreg is halted when we see a man, a Rastafari, wearing his dreads hidden inside his knitted cap. They bulge in out at an alarming angle, a heavy load to balance on his neck. He is leading a handsome white pony with piercing blue eyes that trots proudly alongside the man but with a slight limp which Trufter's trained eye easily spots. We come to a stop on the side of the roadside and Trufter leans over the seat and speaks over me through the window. The horse's name is Ice, presumably after his mesmerising eyes and it is clear that Mr Brits, his owner, is very proud of the pony. Trufter gets out of the bakkie to look at the horse's back leg and tells Brits that the horse is slightly lame and needs to be rested for a few days. She gives him a similar sachet of powder to the one given to Hout Baai's master. It is called BUTE and is a mild anti-inflammatory and painkiller to ease the discomfort that the horse must be feeling.

While Trufter is talking to Mr Brits and inspecting Ice's back leg, a small boy who was nearby when we stopped has now come up to the bakkie, curious to see what is happening. Some dried snot lies in a neat line above his top lip. He spots me sitting in the bakkie and suavely swaggers up to the window, leaning casually against the door. "Wat's jou naam?" he asks me and I stumble over my name apologetically in my pigeon Afrikaans, asking his name in return. He replies simply: "Byman."

Bryony Whitehead

Saying his name so matter-of factly, acting so grown-up -- all I can do in acceptance of this is nod and offer my hand to shake his. This seems to satisfy him and he turns his attention towards Ice and the CHPA inspector who has lifted the pretty pony's leg up for inspection. A chicken pecks busily in the street beside Byman while the world that is Netreg carries on hurriedly around us.

## **Baboons matter**

Driving along the suburban Spaanschemat River Road, the sun already streaming through the Tokai forest, I notice various yield signs in the dappled morning light. The first warns motorists to give way to people who may cross the road, then to people on horses. Further along, yield signs feature silhouetted symbols of guinea fowl and finally, even wilder things: baboons.

The baboons that live mostly high above the populated slopes of the Table Mountain range will occasionally pay their human cousins a visit, coming down from their silent outposts in the clouds for a few takeaway dustbin meals or to nibble on pine kernels that litter the Tokai forest floor. Their destructive ways mean that much alarm is felt when someone discovers their presence. Trashing an orderly kitchen and defecating in the sink or on the kitchen counter seems standard practice in baboon culture. Perhaps it is a customary show of thanks to those who have so generously (and unknowingly) allowed the baboons to partake of their kitchen larder.

In the past, baboons have been considered pests, destructive and unnecessary to the eco-system. Whole troops were sought out and murdered for being troublesome. Slowly this attitude has changed and they have become more and more protected. Today, baboons need the protection and understanding of their human counterparts in order to live in harmony, close to, yet not amongst us.

“People don’t realise how closely related to baboons we are,” Chris Trethowan explains on one of the hottest mornings in Cape Town. “I often have to do a double-take when I’m out with my guy-friends because the way they act towards each other is just like the way male baboons interact,” he laughs, re-enacting the macho camaraderie of back-slapping and chest-bumping that sometimes

occurs in both human and baboon greetings. We sit in the shade, trying to avoid the unforgiving morning sun at a small restaurant next to Pisces Diving – just off the main road to Simon’s Town. I meet Chris, son of Jenni Trethowan, founder of Baboon Matters, who offers me some of his own insights into the difficult world of baboon welfare. It is a small organisation that has made a large impact on the way that baboons are perceived and managed in Kommetjie, Noordhoek and surrounding areas.

Growing up in Kommetjie, his family was well-acquainted with a certain baboon troop lead by Eric, the alpha male of the troop. Eric and Chris go back a long way to a time when the only baboon management that existed in Kommetjie came in the form of a young boy. As a youngster, his parents gave him the job of keeping Eric and his family of baboons up in the hills and away from the dangers in the suburbs. “It became a game between Eric and me. He is very intelligent. Eric used to look at me and seem to chuckle to himself, as if to say, ‘I’m going to make your life difficult today.’ Back then he was a young, strong, fast male. And that’s when I actually started getting involved with baboons.”

Having finished his undergraduate degree with majors in English Literature and Political Science, Chris has joined his mother in the organisation, educating Cape Town residents and tourists, as well as offering assistance to and working with other organisations like the SPCA Wildlife Unit and the Baboon Research Unit of UCT. Chris feels strongly about welfare and education and, amongst other things, he is a guide at Baboon Matters, taking the public on walks to visit particular baboon troops to educate them on the plight of the urban baboon. “You won’t believe how these guided walks change people’s perceptions on baboons.” He smiles as he remembers a tough guy that came along on a walk, “He kept telling everyone how much he hated baboons and that he used to kill them because they’re pests. He had come along on the walk because his wife had forced him. But by the

end of the walk, his attitude towards the baboons had changed completely. He was amazed at their interaction with one another. How human they are.”

Chris agrees that the conflict between baboons and people in residential areas is problematic, but feels that it is not fair to consider the baboons as the nuisance when it is humans who have in fact invaded the baboons’ natural habitat in the first place. At this point I come clean with Chris. For years I have disliked baboons, considered them pests and disgusting creatures that invade our homes. Chris seems taken aback at this forthright statement, raising his eyebrows and remarking, “It’s pretty sad that you think that. Baboons are seen as problematic because they don’t coexist well with people. They are in constant conflict with humans. So we decided that since the official bodies have not done anything about managing the problem, we would find a way.” The 28 baboon monitors that the organisation employs are there to herd the baboons. Watching over the troop by day, which is normally a twelve-hour shift, the monitors ensure that the baboons stay up in the mountains, preventing them from coming down to raid in the residential areas. Sadly, the organisation has no funding as yet for this project. In spite of this, it has been extremely successful. Monitoring four troops across the Scarborough, Da Gama, Tokai and Kommetjie areas, the Baboon Matters monitors have helped to reduce baboon-human conflict.

Not even a week passes from the time I meet with Chris when the Cape Times runs a story with photographs from Liz Hardman on how unruly the baboons have become in Simon’s Town, due to constant feeding by visitors to the area. The pictures show a baboon opening a car door and sitting inside it. A further story by Melanie Gosling of the Cape Times reports that there are some tour operators who “send an advance vehicle to throw food on to the roadside to attract baboons so their clients will have a ready-made baboon picnic photograph.” Sadly, it is for this reason that baboons have become a menace and a danger to humans. Even locals who know better than to feed and

interact with the baboons have experienced an increase in their confidence in approaching humans for food, to the point where a picnic at Cape Point can be abruptly interrupted by an aggressive baboon raid.

Another article, this time about the cruelty that humans show towards baboons, is printed in the Cape Times. The headline reads, 'Shooting of baboons leaves many badly injured' followed by a description of horrific treatment of baboons by some residents on Cape Town's South Peninsula. Weapons like bullwhips with lead sinkers attached and shot guns are used to 'discourage' baboons from visiting the residents' homes. The baboons suffer from festering wounds and broken bones for excruciating lengths of time before the welfare organisations are able to find and treat them.

Jenni Trethowan, Chris's mother, is interviewed in this article and explains that residents also need to make sure that their dustbins are properly secured and access to their homes is minimal to ensure that baboons don't have an opportunity to ransack. She points out that a Tokai boarding school's dustbins were being raided by the baboons. In the article, she is quoted as saying, "We've spoken to the principal before, but it has not helped." Since baboons are opportunists, they will risk coming into suburban areas to forage from the dustbins and fruit trees. "If they see there are no rewards for taking the risks, they won't do it," Chris explains. Experts postulate that because baboons see the relinquishment of food by another (in this case, humans) as a weakness, a proclamation of subordination to the baboon, they have become brazen in their encounters with humans they think might have food, becoming aggressive when they encounter resistance.

Educating people on why baboons come into their areas, and how to ensure that there is minimal damage to property, is partly what Baboon Matters has attempted to do by offering its guided Baboon Walks to the public. Yet the walks have been met with some resistance from residents in the

South Peninsula. "It's a lack of education," Chris replies when I ask him why he thinks there has been this resistance. The Baboon Matters website has a webpage dedicated to addressing these misgivings. Accusations that Baboon Matters is only making money from the baboons or that the organisation keeps the baboons in the villages to make the walks viable are perceptions that the wildlife welfare organisations battle on a daily basis. The web page reply to both of these accusations stresses that the organisation has the baboons' best interests at heart, that it aims to ensure their safety and wellbeing and that it wants to help create a better relationship between baboons and people through education and correct baboon management.

The Baboon Monitors project began in 1998 with the Cape Town Unicity, the South African National Parks and Cape Nature Conservation joining together to offer a solution to the increasing conflict between people and baboons. Today, Baboon Matters is the only organisation that is running the Baboon Monitors project and with the little funding they have received from the municipality, they manage to cover four different baboon troops. The monitored troops are kept away from people, even when on the guided walks.

Early one morning, I meet Chris and his colleague Nick Telford who will take me and three German men up to the Kommetjie mountain to visit Chris's old friend Eric the baboon and his troop. The three Germans are visiting Cape Town to scout out the possible photographic work that can be done before the 2010 World Cup Soccer tournament and are interested in observing the famed Chacma Baboon in the wild. Before heading out on the walk, we sit on the various wooden chairs in the Baboon Matters small office while Chris gives us a quick rundown of what to expect. He states the rules emphatically: No food. No touching. End of story. He warns me as the only female in the group that the very young baboons may approach me as they see human females as similar to their mothers. If this is to happen, Chris tells me, I am to move away and not be tempted to pick them up.

Chris and I catch a lift in Nick's white Citi-Golf, while the three Germans follow in a large off-road vehicle. We're off to Ocean View, which backs onto the Slanghoek slopes that we'll be climbing. It's a short drive and during this time, I learn that Nick also works with Baboon Matters as a guide and is himself studying Nature Conservation at Cape Technikon. He doesn't know the Slanghoek troop as well as he does the Da Gama troop which is lead by the alpha male, George, one of Eric's sons. We wind our way up through the dilapidated houses of Ocean View until we come to a dead end. Here, we park our cars just outside the entrance of a face-brick house that has statues of baboons, standing as watchmen over the house and the mountain.

Behind us, the huge 4x4 that the three Germans have driven mounts the curb coming to park right beside the small CitiGolf. As they climb out, I notice for the first time how ill-equipped they all are for a morning spent walking up a mountain. One of them, the oldest man, wears perfectly polished leather-soled Italian shoes that make it difficult to climb the steep and sandy slopes of the mountain side. I walk slowly behind him, talking to Nick who takes up the rear. A few times I hold my hand out to steady the poor man as he climbs in his treacherous foot wear. Yet he doesn't complain once, choosing instead to struggle on determinedly.

His effort, as well as mine, is well-rewarded by our first encounter with the baboon troop. We have been walking with our heads down, studying our footing as we go. As we catch up to the rest of the group, it is a sudden yet exciting sight to find that there on a rocky outcrop sits the nursery of the troop: a 'mommy' as Chris calls her and her baby who is shy to meet us and a few of the young ones who leap confidently at one another on the rock face, hanging onto each other as if trying to knock each other off. This game has been dubbed Spiderman by Baboon Matters and while they play it, the

baboons learn how to grip and climb as well as test their agility, developing their strength all the while.

Chris introduces the three that are playing in this manner as See no, Hear no and Speak no: three brothers about the same age that constantly challenge one another and get up to mischief. The nursery is a special sight as the youngsters will grow up together and know each other well. "It's like a baboon school, except they are learning by trial and error," says Chris. A young baboon comes up to the mother with the young baby and tries to take the baby from her. Siblings, I find out, will look after their younger brothers and sisters, especially the female juveniles. A dialogue of murmuring goes on between the mother and the juvenile that sounds like, "Mmmm, mm, mm, mmm." The tone of the mother's response to the juvenile's demanding and outstretched arms becomes more urgent and, taking heed of the mother's reluctance, the juvenile gives up and leaves mother and baby to cuddle. The baby is curious about us and stares with large gentle eyes from behind its mother. I learn that, like marsupials, baby baboons cling to the mother's front (though she does not have a pouch), so as to be close to her nourishing milk. When they grow older and gain more strength, the babies learn to ride on their mother's back.

Chris leaves our group and walks down a path below the small cliff where the nursery is playing. The three brothers stop and stare intently at Chris's white hat that bobs below them, like a float on a fishing line, teasing the surface of the water. Their eyes carefully follow his every movement as if wondering what they should do or whether he will be a source of entertainment for them. Their attention span isn't long enough to keep them interested and soon the three that are playing about on the cliff return to their Spiderman game, while Chris turns and walks back up to us, having found no more baboons on the opposite side.

We turn away from this group of baboons to walk higher up in search of the rest of the troop. A female baboon walks past us, hips swaying as she goes. Her bum is large and bright pink, almost triangular in shape. I am told that a female baboon's backside changes in shape and colour based on her menstrual cycle. As we watch her go by, one of the young males seizes her roughly, mounting her from behind and vigorously thrusts his pelvis. His gestures are so human-like, that it is difficult not to be shocked. While he thrusts with his hips, he looks over at us with an expression of glazed defiance on his face. It is not long-lasting though. The female puts up no fuss, but she doesn't seem very excited either. In fact she seems to stare distractedly out over the rooftops of Ocean View to Noordhoek beach. As quickly as he seized her he has finished and moves off calmly. She throws a little "mmm, mm" over her shoulder at him. The young male isn't virile enough just yet and this is clear from the way the female reacts to him. The noise she makes after he attempts to mate with her is called a copulation call and according to Chris, hers wasn't a very satisfied call. Usually, it is a full-throated, primal howl to the hills. A successful mating session would result in the male baboon guarding the female from any other possible suitors. In fact, he will fight other males to ensure that his seed is protected.

I wonder about the argument that animals do not mate for pleasure after observing this brief sexual encounter between two baboons. Issues that we might experience as humans engaging in sexual relations are reflected in this encounter. He is young, inexperienced, not virile enough. She submits to his will, though she is not at all satisfied...the strong correlation to our own kind makes me smile.

Later on, we follow the baboons down the slopes to the pine trees that they use as a source of food and safety. There we finally see the famous Eric, old and lacking the muscle and strength of the other male baboons. At first it is only Eric and a pregnant female who sit on the ground, lazing away the morning. The pregnant female looks quite immobile and when she does get up, she waddles

uncomfortably. Soon a few more baboons arrive, the three mischievous brothers and other younger baboons and their mothers come through the long grass at us, hesitating only slightly when they see the line of human beings that separates them from the pine trees. They walk past us, showing Chris their bums in deference to his position as an older male. Chris has spent enough time with this troop to be recognised by them as part of their troop. Though he does not participate in any of their activities, nor does he ever touch or feed the baboons, they are well aware of his social placement through the particular ways he has asserted his own presence.

We soon see more females behind them. They climb onto a large rock, only five metres away. One of them wears a bulky black collar-like thing around her neck. Tenderly holding her very young baby to her breast, the female is awkward in her movements and cannot look down at her baby with ease. Her name is Gogo, meaning 'grandmother' in isiXhosa. She is roughly 16 years of age – a ripe old age for a baboon. A few months ago, she was radio-collared by the Baboon Research Unit (BRU) at UCT. Chris explains that they collar the females because they stay with their troops, while males tend to roam more. The problem with this is evident when Chris points out that when she was radio-collared, she was not yet pregnant. Unfortunately, as she has gained weight, so the collar has become more and more restricting for her, hindering her movements and even her breathing. It weighs about a seventh of her body weight so is heavy to carry around her neck. Chris is angry at the research unit for using such ungainly and inhumane methods to track the troop.

“The scientists are not really concerned about the welfare of the animals as long as they are getting the necessary data for their research. Of course, as an advocate of the welfare of the animals, Baboon Matters disagrees strongly with the way that BRU treats the baboons. We feel that it shows a complete disregard for the animals,” he says heatedly. “If UCT really wanted to study them and get all the data effectively and properly, they would take it [the way they treat/handle the baboons] a

bit more seriously. We really feel that they're doing the bare minimum so that they can get their results, get their papers published, they can get their academic prestige and then beyond that they don't give a flying fuck." His concerns are not unwarranted as he has been observing Gogo struggle with the collar from before she fell pregnant. No doubt he will go on to fight this cruelty just as he does the cruelty shown by residents who injure the baboons.

Not far from these encounters, live the people of Ocean View and if the baboons turn to the right and make their way roughly south, they will be able to view the sprawling rooftops of Masiphumelele. Consequently, these are the two areas that have seen the greatest amount of baboon-human conflict in the past. With the introduction of the Baboon Monitor system, this conflict has been reduced by a drastic 85%.

On our way up the mountain, we see two red spots on the next slope of the mountain range. These are the two Baboon Monitors that are on duty today, watching the troop's movements from a good distance. They spend twelve to thirteen hours on the mountain, discouraging the troop from entering the townships down below. Their faded red baboon monitor t-shirts are indicative of the scarcity of funding that this project is experiencing. Baboon Matters is running the monitoring with little or no financial aid from other organisations. But this can't go on forever. It is a proven case that baboon monitoring is successful, yet authorities have been extremely slow to offer financial or any other aid, the result being a growing number of reports by tourists and residents who have fallen victim to baboon raids.

As if to demonstrate the close proximity of wildlife to human settlement, we encounter an incident as we walk down the mountain and along the edge of Ocean View. A terrified shriek rings out from

one of the houses further down the road. Like a siren, it sustains its note for a while and ends in a gulping sob. “Ma! ‘n Bobejaan! n’ Bobejaan!” sobs the voice.

I am the first to see the baboon as he comes loping up the road and into the yard of the last house at the edge of the suburb. He is a huge specimen, walking casually on his knuckles. The grey hair on his back ripples and shines – a proud mane. It seems to echo the strength of his body in what must be the prime of his life. The dogs of that house are locked inside, going crazy, a frenzy of ferocious barking. Amidst the cacophony of hysterical barking and traumatised shrieking, I call to Chris who walks calmly to the house, looking in to see if he can find the baboon.

A man wearing a white vest comes to the front door, his figure framed by the rigid metal bars of the security gate. Fiddling noisily with the lock, he hurries to let his whining dogs out of the house. As the key clicks the lock open, the dogs burst out into the yard almost screaming with excitement. They know there is a baboon in the neighbourhood. Rushing around the corner of the house and past Chris, it is less than a minute before the baboon comes sprinting out of the yard, with three dogs raging at his tail. The four men and I jump aside as the baboon seems to charge in our direction. With much relief from the five of us, he sees us early enough to change course, turning left and away from us, in the direction from which we have just come. The dogs are hot on his tail and I am afraid that the baboon will turn around and attack them. I wonder if they will have much power against him then. But he seems intent on getting as far away as possible and continues to sprint, not pausing for a second. The dogs stop soon, satisfied that the baboon is far enough away, no longer a threat or perhaps it is a game to them that has lost its excitement now. Whatever the reason, the three dogs trot back, tails wagging, heads held high.

The spectacle is over and Chris comes trudging back up from the houses after speaking briefly to their inhabitants. I can't believe my luck at experiencing exactly what I had joined Baboon Matters to research. "A bit of an over-reaction," is Chris's response to the blood-curdling screaming of the young girl who had notified us in the first place of the baboon. I can't help but agree with him in one sense. The baboon had done nothing to her or her house, and yet her scream had at first lead me to think that perhaps she had been injured. I also find it strange that in an area that is likely to see baboons frequently, she would be so surprised or frightened of them. Earlier, Chris mentioned that Baboon Matters is heavily involved in areas such as Ocean View and Masiphumelele, meaning that their residents should have some idea of how to deal with and discourage baboons who enter their homes. "Until these guys learn to secure their rubbish bins and put food away, this is going to be an ongoing event," is Chris's next comment. "It doesn't take that much effort to tie some rope around your bin." The scenario illustrates just how much work welfare organisations like Baboon Matters still has to do in these areas since the interaction between humans and baboons here has clearly made little headway, even if Baboon Matters has managed to inform the residents to some extent. Setting one's dogs on a large male baboon worked this time, but what if that baboon had decided to fight them instead of skedaddling up the mountain? Would the man who set his dogs on the baboon be ready to deal with a couple of dead dogs? The war on baboons continues, leaving Baboon Matters with an ongoing struggle.

Short of the radical proposal that I have heard people suggest – the total eradication of the Chacma baboon from the Table Mountain range – residents and authorities alike need to be more accountable for the continued and increasing baboon raids. Baboon Matters is only one small organisation that struggles valiantly to manage the baboons themselves, but a more holistic approach, in which other organisations might help to educate people on ways to manage the baboons, is sorely needed.



## Part 2

It is not unusual to hear the claim that, in many ways, animals have shaped human cultures. From early on in our history, humanity has depended on animals for food, companionship, protection and even as objects of worship. It is for these reasons that animals play a pivotal role in our literature. Through our depiction of them, we are able to illustrate what it is to be human. Fables about animals can be traced back to ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, but it is Aesop's Fables, dating back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., three-quarters of which are about animals, that illustrate so strongly the large role animals have played in the development and understanding of our own species (Kenneth, 1995: 234).

Modern stories like *White Fang* by Jack London and *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell are good examples of the continued attraction of telling stories that relate to human-animal relations. Just as Aesop's fables did hundreds of years ago, these stories illustrate the difference between good and bad, right and wrong through the way the human characters interact with the animals. The message of compassion that each of these stories conveys urges us to consider the way that we treat both people and animals in our own lives. It was with these stories in mind that I attempted to write nonfiction stories that convey compassion and courage through the human-animal interaction that occurs in our everyday lives. Through three articles, written in the mode of narrative literary journalism, I hope I have captured the essence of the human-animal relationships that occurred in the lives of those involved.

I will firstly lay the foundations for the project by distinguishing between animal welfare and animal rights with reference to my own experiences in the field, as well as drawing on the work of

established theorists. I will then argue for my chosen genre, namely, narrative literary journalism, calling on its theorists and advocates such as Tom Wolfe, John Hartsock and Richard Kallan to illustrate its stylistic and structural devices, highlighting the challenge of constructing the stories in such a way as to bring about the intended reflection in the reader. I shall also use my own experiences during my fieldwork and writing to illustrate the aims of the genre. I will deal with the problems of truth that occur in nonfiction by comparison with those that occur in fiction. This question will be addressed with reference to Daniel Lehman's work, *Matters of Fact: Reading Nonfiction over the Edge* (1997).

## **Making a distinction**

### **Animal welfare and animal rights**

The treatment of animals in society is bolstered by two broad schools of thought, or so I learnt from Dee Terblanche, the Managing Director of the Cart Horse Protection Association. It is here that I would like to mark the difference between the animal rights activist and the animal welfare officer as this is essential to the understanding of the choice of stories written for this project.

Both lines of thought assume that animals are an important part of the eco-system, and should be carefully looked after and protected. The overarching difference between the two camps concerns humanity's involvement in and contact with animals' lives. While the animal rights activist will argue that animals should be left as they are to live without interruption or oppression from human beings, those arguing for animal welfare recognise that animals and people will always interact.

Both philosophies appear to agree that human-animal relations have existed for eons as we have come to depend on animals for the provision of meat, protection, hunting and finally, companionship. There is evidence, for example, that the domestic dog – which was seen as a companion and not a hunting aid – came onto the scene over 11,500 years ago (Preece & Chamberlain, 1993: 6, 7). So it is that our development and the development of many species of animals, have been reliant on one another in the past to the extent that had we not had such contact with these species, our own development would have been vastly different. I think of our dependence on cows for their milk and meat or dogs for their protection and companionship as examples of this dependence. Yet even though we have depended on these species, the idea of treating such beasts humanely has emerged relatively recently in Western cultures. Historically,

humanity has considered itself superior to other creatures, seeing itself as separate from nature, rather than as part of the natural world (Preece et al, 1993: 5). Cruelty towards animals of all kinds was documented during the reign of the Roman Empire, during which thousands of animals were killed and tortured for sport (Preece et al., 1995: 10).

This notion of the inferiority of animals and their subjection to human beings has continued through the ages in cultures the world over to manifest itself in our societies today, leading to the mistreatment of many domestic and even wild animals with which we come into contact. It is not uncommon for pet owners to consider their pets to be expendable, renewable items, mere objects that might satisfy our sentimental side. Animal rights activists believe that the benefits of keeping animals as pets or for companionship lies exclusively with the human (Preece et al, 1993: 235).

Philosopher and animal rights activist, Luce Irigaray disapproves of such relationships in her work *Animal Compassion*: "I have evoked little about the animals termed domestic or domesticated. I do not like this relationship to animals much ... I like animals in their home, living in their territory, and coming from time to time to offer me freely some testimony of friendship" (2004: 196). This view derives from the philosophy that animals should be allowed to live the way they are born to, amongst their own kind, without interference from human beings. Yet, as does happen, the question of what to do were a mouse to take up residence in your larder and begin to eat your supplies, is unavoidable. While the natural answer to this problem from an animal rights activist is to leave the animal be, the question of the hierarchy of rights does come into play. Your right to an untouched larder, for example, comes up against the mouse's right to live its life without interference from human beings. More often than not, the mouse will emerge at the lower end of this hierarchy. This is where the role of the animal welfare officer is able to remove the offending mouse without causing it or the offended human any unnecessary damage. It is, I believe, inevitable that humans and

animals will come into conflict over such issues as food and shelter, highlighting my point that humans and animals are inextricably linked to one another, co-dependent for differing reasons.

Animal rights has its place, working hand in hand with animal welfare organisations worldwide to ensure that animals receive the protection and support they need amidst the ever-growing human population the world over. It was through legislative decisions such as Richard Martin's in 1821 to protect animals against cruelty in Britain, and the founding of the SPCA in 1824 to provide support and protection to horses against neglect and abuse, that the Western world began to consider the wellbeing of animals (Preece et al., 1993: 236).

In the novella, *The Lives of Animals*, J. M. Coetzee refers to chimpanzee Red Peter, an ape who addresses science scholars in Kafka's *Report to an Academy*. Red Peter's speech addresses the scientists' expectations for him to act more human while in fact all he desires is to behave in the manner of his species. Coetzee wants us to question ourselves: By projecting our own human traits onto animals, even expecting them to reason as we do, are we not robbing animals of their inherent traits and characteristics? Coetzee postulates, using Red Peter's voice: if he is not to submit to the so-called reason that the science scholars expect of him, "then what is left for [him] but to gibber and emote and knock over [his] water glass and generally make a monkey of [himself]?" (1999: 26).

Wendy Woodward writes in her book, *The Animal Gaze*, that the primary point of a human-animal relationship is the acknowledgement that the animal is a 'self' or sentient being capable of responding to a human action or emotion and being responded to by a human. In this way, the animal has a point of view *at least* in so far as its response brings a human to become aware of herself. Many have sought to close the ethical gap between humans and animals that has existed for many centuries in Western thought, including Coetzee in *The Lives of Animals*. Red Peter's address

of the academy highlights that animals are beings that do not necessarily require the emotions and feelings that humans may unwittingly attribute to them (which would show his monkey nature to be silly), but rather that behaving in an animal way should be recognised as deserving of appreciation in its own right. Indeed, he challenges us to consider nonhuman animals as equal beings to humans, deserving of the same concern for well-being as their human counterparts.

These thoughts on animal rights are simply a summary to enable better understanding of my decision to write about animal welfare since it is my belief that while the philosophy of animal rights is both noble and important, it is unfortunately not so easily applied to society as we know it. By contrast, society is exactly what theories of animal welfare take into account, looking to create a practical and realistic system of protection and care for animals that are domesticated or that come into contact with human beings on a regular basis. Animal welfare accepts that humans and animals will always come into contact with one another. In Dee Terblanche's words, "Our job is to look after these domestic animals and ensure that bad things don't happen to them. That means educating those people who have contact [with the animals] on how to look after them properly." (Interview: 22 August 2008).

Welfare organisations, therefore, deal as much with people as they do with the animals. The organisations work to monitor and regulate the treatment of animals to ensure that there is no abuse. In South Africa, there are a number of factors influencing the mistreatment of animals. Animal abuse happens through neglect, whether it is intentional or not. In cases where the neglect is unintentional, this could be due to a lack of education. In an instance that I chose not to include in my article, "Blood and Rust" about the SPCA, we stopped in at a house in Brooklyn, Cape Town which had received a warning a few weeks before from the local SPCA inspector, Wayne Hector, to sort out the living conditions of two puppy Boerbuls. The caretaker of the dogs, a teenager of about

fifteen years, was extremely proud to show us his animals, bringing them both into the lounge on their matching leads to show them off. He had clearly taken the time and interest to feed and groom the dogs. Both dogs reacted to being handled quite happily and welcomed the company of Hector and myself. Unfortunately, their young owner, as well as the rest of his family, was not aware that cleaning up the animals' faeces on a regular basis and ensuring that they had fresh water, were ways to keep the animals free of disease and infection. Instead of fining the family or confiscating the animals, Hector explained to them about how to look after the dogs and that this would help improve their development from healthy puppies into strapping dogs. This educational approach is paramount to the continued development of South Africa's society. After discussing this at length with Hector and Terblanche, I believe it is possible to extend this learnt compassion for animals into compassion in human relationships.

Lawrence Kohlberg's cognitive development theory suggests that moral reasoning requires input from various aspects in a child's life (Hook, Watts & Cockcroft, 2002: 295). Unfortunately, many a child's chance to develop morally is disadvantaged by lack of access to a sound educational system or lack of guidance from parents. These children may then lack the ability to identify well with others on an emotional level. Learning to care for a pet could be one way for children to learn this compassion. Dee Terblanche's argument is a strong one: "Having contact with animals is our children's first chance to learn compassion, show emotion, learn to share and respect and be responsible" (Interview: 22 August 2008).

Wendy Woodward puts forward a more profound point about our relationship with animals through highlighting that as humans, we see animals as subordinate beings, as if to be nonhuman were a disadvantage. This way of thought has led to our continued mistreatment of animals to the point that killing a nonhuman, an animal is itself seen as noncriminal. Continued efforts by animal welfare

and rights advocates has ensured that animals receive some legislative protection. Woodward argues that “the principles of animal welfare...foreground the rights of humans over animals,” while noting that animals are all “subject to commercial interests.” (2008: 12). This and other evidence indicates that including animals as ‘sentient beings whose well-being matters’ is far from being integrated into South Africa’s Constitution. The most progressive in the world, the Constitution ensures that people receive equal treatment and rights by our legal system. Perhaps a day will come when our animal counterparts will receive recognition that their well-being and interests matter in our societies. Until then, our animal welfare organisations and those advocates of animal rights will continue their work as best they can.

### **Narrative Literary Journalism**

Recording events and making this record available to the general public is a task assigned to the journalist, so-called for his or her skill in recording real-life events accurately and truthfully so that they will be understood clearly. The acts of going out into the field and observing the event or happening, interviewing the people and recording other relevant details, and then putting these details into a coherent, unbiased and truthful form is known as reportage. The development of this factual reportage is described by Alan Trachtenberg as a “paradox in human perception” because while traditional news reporting strives to bring the world and its events closer to the reader, it may in fact alienate them from those very experiences through this hard-line factual style (Hartsock, 2000: 55).

Though factual reportage remains an important function of the journalist, there are some who have taken the idea of reportage beyond the realms of its traditional meaning and created a journalism that offers the reader a chance to ‘re-live’ the experience from the perspectives of the characters it writes about. In *Matters of Fact: Reading Nonfiction over the Edge*, Daniel Lehman refers to all types of journalism or nonfiction, when he states that “each one of us [is] implicated materially and historically by the words on the page” (1997: 2).

The reader of narrative literary journalism should be encouraged to reflect on issues and ideas that might arise from the story. In order to encourage this reflection, the writer could adopt a personal tone, have a story that relates to a human issue or one that has relevance to real life problems. Joe Mackall, the editor of *River Teeth* insists, “What the writer brings to a work of creative nonfiction is at least as – and probably more – important than what he or she is writing.” (2003: viii). Tom Wolfe believes that the writer should try any device to catch the reader’s attention (1973: 16). Summing up

the importance of being involved or part of the story as it unfolded, Wolfe says the following in *The New Journalism*: “It seemed all-important to be there when dramatic scenes took place, to get the dialogue, the gestures, the facial expressions, the details of the environment. The idea was to give the full objective description, plus something that readers had always had to go to novels and short stories for: namely, the subjective or emotional life of the characters” (1937: 21).

The difference between reportage and narrative literary journalism is that between an expressive account as opposed to simply informing the reader. Tom Wolfe explains that, unlike straight reportage, the new journalists were writing “a short story, complete with symbolism ... and yet true-life, as they say, about something that happened today ...” (1973: 13-14). Wolfe describes the new journalism as a “psychological phenomenon” (1973: 7). Reporters who wrote column or feature pieces for newspapers considered their jobs as simply a step in the right direction towards becoming novelists. These aspiring novelists, according to Wolfe, were beginning to include some of their novelistic or story-writing tendencies in the reporting they did, demonstrating that it was possible to use any literary device within a piece of journalism to excite the reader intellectually or emotionally (Wolfe: 15).

Narrative literary journalism strives to relate the events both with reference to the time at which they take place and the impact or meaning that those events might have on the characters and the readers. The author does not ignore his own presence and influence in the events. According to David Culbert, the writer of new journalism carefully inscribes their persona into the story, “so that the reader is tempted to believe he can actually see the reporter in the story” (qtd. in Kallan, 2001: 72). Wolfe agrees, in *The New Journalism*, believing that the writer should firmly implicate himself and the reader. He suggests some stylistic methods of doing this. First he introduces the ‘Hectoring Narrator’ which involves the narrator setting the scene by addressing the character directly in the

narrative (1973: 16, 17). Dialogue enables the reader to 'talk' to the characters and ask questions that they may want to ask (1973: 18). Further still, Wolfe explains that he would even take on the character himself in the story, effectively slipping "into the eye sockets" (1973: 18) of the person he was interviewing to give the reader an idea of what it felt like to be that character, "experiencing the world through [the character's] central nervous system throughout the scene" (1973: 19). The last stylistic device that Wolfe touches on makes use of grammar and punctuation to emphasise a point or idea. By distorting these two things, Wolfe felt he was not only writing what people were saying, but indicating what people were thinking (1973: 21, 22).

Enter a postmodern version of this literary journalist. By the late 1990s, writers who were following this new form of journalism had evolved it, built on it using their own theories and styles. This new generation of writers included Leon Dash, who wrote *Rosa Lee* and Jon Krakauer author of *Into the Wild*. They had begun to experiment with the way one gets the story, developing innovative immersion tactics rather than experimenting with the form and language used to convey the story. This group of writers has been dubbed by theorists such as Robert Boynton the 'New New Journalists' because of their close affiliation with the New Journalists that Wolfe defines. Yet according to Boynton, these journalists are focusing their writing in different ways to Wolfe's generation. Instead of emphasising the 'status-life' of a character or scene, these writers are more interested in the complexity of society, taking a marked interest in the way that people interact with one another, as well addressing both class and race. Boynton believes that this is an area that older writers were not particularly concerned with, quoting the following from historian Alan Trachtenberg: "It is style that matters, not politics; pleasure, not power; status, not class.... Wolfe's revolution changes nothing, inverts nothing, in fact is after nothing but status" (2005: xiv).

My own story choices, the way that I have gone about doing the fieldwork and how I have written the pieces has been done along the principles held by the New New Journalists. The pieces show a strong concern for the greater issue of animal welfare in society rather than the status held by people in this industry, looking at the affects on both people and animals of decisions made in organisations that deal with the welfare of animals. Though every aspect of the story is taken into account, including status-life, my main concern in each story takes into account the social and political impact. Wolfe's lack of social concern in his pieces is evident and heavily criticised by some. His tunnel-vision focus on status is believed to be unjournalistic to the extent that his choice to uphold "fashion over substance" detracts from the complexity and depth that are considered necessary attributes of a journalistic piece (Boynton: 2005, xiv).

The New New Journalists, according to Boynton, write in a style closer to reportage than literature. This is because the writer is focused on the content of the story more than structure and style. John Krakauer's epic piece of journalism entitled *Into the Wild* is a good example of the author sticking closely to this idea of reportage, backing up the story carefully with strong reference to interviewees. His work is a good example of the immersion tactics mentioned above, in which the journalist's investigative trail becomes his way of life. Krakauer met the people and did the things that his subject, Christopher John McCandless who had died about a year before, had done in order better to understand the psyche of his subject at the time of his disappearance. His admission to this is recorded in the Author's Note: "Unwilling to let McCandless go, I spent more than a year retracing the convoluted path that led to his death in the Alaska taiga, chasing down details of his peregrinations with an interest that bordered on obsession" (1995: x). Boynton makes the distinction between the old and new generations of Narrative Literary Journalists by saying that while those writers in the 1960s and 1970s went inside of their characters' heads, or as Wolfe puts it, "into their

eye-sockets”, the New New Journalists strove to become part of their character’s lives in order to understand in depth what the story meant (2005: xiii).

Though this method of total immersion is an effective way to ensure better insight into the subject, it is not always possible to achieve, as I found in my own fieldwork. I spoke to each of my subjects over a number of weeks, meeting with them, at most, three or four times. This may have been different had time and cost not come into play as restraining factors. Furthermore, that my work was for a degree and not for immediate publication (meaning there was no guaranteed publicity or exposure for the subject and their organisation), understandably influenced the amount of time each subject was willing to spend with me.

While this total immersion into the life of the character enables the writer to understand better the issues at hand, it also begins to blur the line between the public and private life of that character to the extent that this divide is no longer a necessary concern. For example, Krakauer’s research into McCandless’s life meant that he would need to reveal the deep-seated issues within the family that may have affected him in order to understand why he had rejected them so strongly. Krakauer’s investigations into the everyday life of one subject meant that he would inevitably come to explore what Gay Talese describes as “the fictional current that flows beneath the stream of reality” (Boynton, 2005: xv). Indeed, Krakauer highlights these ‘currents’ in the Author’s Note: “In trying to understand McCandless, I inevitably came to reflect on other, larger subjects as well: the grip wilderness has on the American imagination, the allure high-risk activities hold for young men of a certain mind, the complicated, highly charged bond that exists between fathers and sons” (1995: x).

### **It's all fiction: negotiating truth claims in literary journalism**

Though the constructs and definitions of narrative literary journalism have been discussed above, the question of whether this type of writing can really be differentiated from fiction still remains to be explored. Behind this question is the issue of ethics in journalism, particularly because this kind of writing gives leeway for more creativity. Through a close reading of Daniel W. Lehman's work, *Matters of Fact: Reading Nonfiction over the Edge* (1997), I will explore the differences between nonfiction and fiction, focussing on the obligation to truth that the nonfiction writer has. I shall use examples from my own work, as well as work from other narrative literary journalists.

The question of whether narrative journalism is really any different from fiction is one that theorists have argued over from the time the genre began gaining popularity. Sceptics, such as Boynton, believe that the differentiation is unnecessary, since the idea that literary journalism would drop any of its journalistic elements is impractical and unethical. Boynton postulates that Wolfe's claim of the death of the novel, whilst likening the new journalism to Charles Dickens's epic stories, is at best contradictory. Though the new journalism that Wolfe had defined bore some similarity in technique to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels, the authors' methods were completely different (2005: xix).

The new journalism that Wolfe marks as so significant in the history of American literature, Boynton believes is merely the next step in American journalism, an area that was evolving along with its readership (2005: xviii). The movement, he argues, was a response to an increase in the amount of scientific research that was being released during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. At this time, the increase in wealth *per capita*, the surge in population growth (both in

immigrants to the country and births) and the increase in scientific research, were changes that required a creative form of writing in order to convey the profound impact of these changes on the American psyche (Boynton, 2005: xxi, xxii). In the words of Hartsock, “[A] more narrative, subjective form conveyed such overwhelming data in a comprehensible manner” (2000: 58). Nevertheless, Wolfe’s manifesto of a new movement in literature created a stir in the literary world, raising the question of whether the line between fact and fiction existed.

This debate as to whether fiction can be differentiated from nonfiction is ongoing, but for the purposes of this argument, I will present two main theorists who address the question from opposite ends. While fiction has always been recognised as a construction of the imagination, theorists such as Phyllis McCord Frus believe that since nonfictional texts too must undergo construction, they are no different from the fictional text: “... in short stories, we get plot, temporal disjunctions, and digressions, and they are there not only to interest us in going forward but to remind us that this is not a record of things but of the recording mind” (Frus, 1985: 755). Roland Barthes seems to concur in his essay *Historical Discourse*: “Historical discourse does not follow reality, it only signifies it: it asserts at every moment: *this happened*, but the meaning conveyed is only that someone is making an assertion” (1970: 154).

Narrative literary journalism illustrates Frus and Barthes’ arguments as it adopts a technique infused with creative license, allowing the techniques and styles of fictional work to mingle with the truth claims it makes. Yet, Daniel Lehman, author of *Matters of Fact* (1997) believes that it is necessary to differentiate between fiction and nonfictional texts because the latter implicates the writer, reader and subject inside the text as well as (and most significantly) in real-life experience. The impact of a work of nonfiction has accountability not only for the writer who constructs the text, but for the reader and subject who are unavoidably affected by the text through its link to history. Janet

Malcolm's analogy in her work *The Journalist and the Murderer* (1990) explains what it means to be a writer of nonfiction, "[T]he writer of non-fiction is only the renter who must abide by the conditions of his lease" (153).

To be implicated or in the words of Lehman, "deeply involved, even incriminated" (1997: 4) in the work, means that the author has an obligation to truth because of those others (the reader and the subject) who come into contact with the text and the experience about which it writes. A strong example of this appears in the opening pages of Malcolm's work. Malcolm argues strongly that, while journalists justify their treatment of the information they receive from their subjects in terms of freedom of speech or because the information is in the public's interest, there is nevertheless a subject – a person or people – who are at the mercy of the journalist's interpretation of such information (1990: 3 – 5).

This point made its impact on me while I was doing fieldwork for my piece on the Cart Horse Protection Association (CHPA). I had spoken at length to the Managing Director, Dee Terblanche, whom I had informed of all my intentions to record and interview her and her staff members, but while I was with Officer Diana Trufter, I realised that she had not yet been informed by Terblanche of my journalistic intentions. Initially as I spoke to her about her role in the CHPA, she spoke freely, offering her thoughts to me readily. Curious as to why I had come to the CHPA, she asked and as I believed she already had some idea from Terblanche, I explained that I was a journalism student at UCT, there to write about the CHPA. Her attitude toward me changed momentarily to one of suspicion as she mentioned the many times that journalists had 'duped her' by twisting what she had said or including what she had expressly asked them to keep to themselves. Throughout our time together, Trufter mentioned things 'off the record', a stark change in attitude from the more relaxed one she began with. Malcolm's point rings true at this point: "The catastrophe suffered by the

subject is no simple matter of an unflattering likeness or misrepresentation of his views; what pains him, what rankles and sometimes drives him to extremes of vengefulness, is the deception that has been practiced upon him” (1990: 3).

This brought me to realise that while the subject is logically implicated in the nonfiction text, as well as outside of it through the events and experiences, it is the writer who is implicated through the way that the event is portrayed in the text. Making assertions that inevitably sway the reader’s judgment of the subject at hand through my prejudices and background is unavoidable. Lehman describes this as “the text’s exploitation of its subjects and its referentiality – the sense that it contain[s] an intelligible account of specific historical events, even if that account [is] not objective, transparent, exhaustive, or exclusive” (Lehman, 1997: 8).

Again, I recall my own experience writing my article on the SPCA. Based on my background of learning and privilege, I made the assertion “Our debt to the innocent is unthinkable large, but those of us who have received the message will do what we can to begin to make changes” in reference to the terrible pain that many animals suffer under the hands of humankind. While the assertion itself makes the intended point that there are many people who are aware of and ready to assist in ensuring the improvement in the treatment of animals, I had inadvertently passed judgment through my wording, implying exclusion of those who had not received ‘the message’. Here, my background of learning and the privilege, of being able to afford to live comfortably, lead me to the misguided conclusion that looking after animals is and should be a primary objective for all. In my wording, I had excluded those people who lacked the knowledge or the ability to afford to view the treatment of animals as a primary objective, because they struggle with social evils such poverty and violence. The young boy living in Brooklyn who asked me the question, “But what about people? People need to be looked after more,” illustrates this point (see page 16). I have since reworded the phrase to

read, “Our debt to the innocent is unthinkable large, but those who have received the message will do what they can to make changes.” Removing the phrase ‘those of us’ removes the grave judgment I had unintentionally made.

The nonfiction text engages with actual bodies rather than those that are imagined in creative fictions. Knowing that a text is a work of nonfiction that implicates actual subjects (existing in real life), Lehman believes that it is likely to have a different impact on the reader than if the text claims to be fictional, because it is implicated in history. Lehman uses Vladimir Nabokov’s fictional piece *Lolita* to argue his point. The story, he says, has a profound impact on discerning readers because it is a realistic account of a paedophile’s act of preying on a pre-pubescent girl. So powerful is the writer’s description, that many readers will feel strongly moved by the work. To clarify his position, Lehman explains, “Never would I argue...that because it is fiction, *Lolita* lacks the power to reach outside its text and disturb competent readers... But the reaction – strong and mimetically engaged though it may be – is not precisely the same as it would be were this a nonfictional text” (1997: 7, 8).

Knowing this, James Frey, author of *A Million Little Pieces* (2003), made the claim that the story was in fact a memoir of his life. However, it was soon discovered through a careful records check by the editor of online literary website The Smoking Gun, William Bastone, that James had in fact made a false claim: “Police reports, court records, interviews with law enforcement personnel, and other sources have put the lie to many key sections of Frey’s book. The 36-year-old author, these documents and interviews show, wholly fabricated or wildly embellished details of his purported criminal career, jail terms, and status as an outlaw ‘wanted in three states’” (Bastone, 2006: 1).

The ensuing public reaction was that of mortification as many people were deeply affected by the story, buying the book for its claim to truth. The public reaction to his confession to falsity suggests that the impact of truth in a text is significant as, in Lehman's words, "human beings tend to grope for some outside referentiality to arbitrate the 'truth' about characters" (1997: 14). The death of the cow in *All the king's horses*, my article about the SPCA, is a case in point (65). The description of her death and how she dies is likely to have a different effect on the reader, than if this were a work of imagination, in which the cow was fictional. Lehman argues that "[w]hen characters die in fiction, characters die; when characters die in non-fiction, people [or animals] die" (Lehman, 1997: 14).

Nonfictional narrative, Lehman claims, implicates the author as an "unnamed and unacknowledged character in the text" (1997: 40). The author's own history is thereby affiliated with his or her work because that work is itself implicated in social and historical discourse. The author therefore needs to consider carefully issues of construct such as mind-reading, omnipresence and the attribution of 'voice' to characters within the story as these constructs may influence the way in which the story is read against this discourse. "Readers," writes Lehman, "can learn about the author and the narrative through the way in which the author constructs their story" (Lehman, 1997: 41). Reading narrative in this way allows us "to analyse the ritual of communication between the author, textual phenomena, subjects, and reader" (Lehman, 1997: 49). When a piece of nonfiction does not make reference to a widely known event or subject, careful consideration must be given to the technical construction or narrative decisions made for the piece because the use of style and structure become more significant in this case (Lehman, 1997: 49).

Making a decision to give the reader of *All the king's horses* a scene to picture, I refer to the scene in which the boys allegedly injured the cow's leg. This scene is written as a speculation from the author on how the scene might have unfolded: "Perhaps they were frightening the cows with small

crackers, throwing a lit cracker at the feet of one peacefully grazing cow, and then watching as the cracker burnt down its wick to the loud bang that erupted suddenly underneath her” (see page 11). This decision is close to assuming omnipresence and was carefully thought out before being placed there. Though the paragraph itself is carefully based on second-hand accounts of the gruesome occurrence, as well as carefully worded to ensure that the reader is aware that this is an ‘imagining’ of the scene by the narrator/author, the paragraph could have lead the reader to make the wrong assumptions. As Lehman allows, “[w]hile no one expects that any story will be unambiguously true, nonfiction pits the teller and its subjects in contest over facts and interpretations that plays out across the text” (1997: 50). This observation is linked to Lehman’s argument that every heterodiegetic story (a narrative text in which the writer is not involved as a character) is still in some way a homodiegetic story (the narrator is a participant or a character in the story she tells) – simply by being written by someone (1997: 50).

The author and narrative voice in a work of nonfiction are further challenged as the narrator’s voice is contained within and complicated by the author. This can result in a discrepancy between the author’s values and those expressed by the narrator, often revealing an incongruity between logic and the time-line of a story. The author might allow an idea to appear at a place in the text which shows the narrator to be less informed. Doing this is called paralipsis and according to Lehman this is “a device in which [the narrator] discloses less than he should know” (1997: 55), adopting, for example, an air of naiveté throughout the text, but where the idea of disillusionment is emphasised by the pretence that it is too obvious to discuss. Looking back into my own pieces, I could not find any example of this, however, should the reader do so, it should be made clear that any dissonance between the author’s views and that of the narrator is not intentional and should be read as paralipsis.

Lehman calls the final problem that can occur in nonfiction pieces, the 'Effaced Subject' (1997:62). Here, the narrator might attempt to hold the power of representation of meaning by dominating the subject so that they become the 'other' in the story, objectified and alienated from any ability to make their own decisions. Lehman uses Freud's case study *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* as an example of such a nonfiction text. Through appropriating Dora's story, Freud is able to erase her presence from reality and put in its place, his own interpretation of her very existence. He "consumes virtually all traces of Dora's extratextual and intratextual identity until all that remains is his own voice" (Lehman, 1997: 63). Lehman identifies yet another factor of effacement of the subject by Freud: that of concealing his process, "I have as a rule not reproduced the process of interpretation to which the patient's associations and communications had to be subjected, but only the results of the process" (qtd. in Lehman, 1997: 63). It is this refusal to reveal the process of interpretation that Lehman claims leaves Freud's readers no choice but to accept Freud's interpretation of the scenario. While this technique is perfectly acceptable in works of fiction, nonfiction requires a more 'scientific' reading of its characters in which the author makes reference to the subject's actions and reasons, allowing them autonomy of voice. Michel Foucault refers to scientific discourse as requiring reconstruction of the event or act as it happened, including the intentions of the subjects involved, "the obsessions that accompanied it, the images, desires, modulations, and quality of the pleasure that animated it" (qtd. in Lehman, 1997: 62) which is just as relevant to the type of nonfictional works that I have discussed.

The difficulty I had faced with achieving the total immersion strategy that the New New Journalist is said to use can result in this problem of the Effaced Subject. I look at my coverage of certain characters in my articles: the boy in the Spiderman t-shirt in *Blood and Rust* and the Germans in *Baboons matter*. These both could be likened to the effaced subject because their characters were under-developed. My focus on animal welfare did not allow me the privilege to explore these characters in great detail.

Narrative literary journalism, creative nonfiction, new journalism, whatever you call it, the genre is a powerful tool of communication with a capacity to draw in the interpreted truths of writers and subjects. With it, as I have illustrated, come a number of problems that the writer and reader should take into consideration. A piece of nonfiction is an organic and therefore, flawed piece. Yet in its imperfection, we find humanity, capturing our emotions – even our exact thoughts – in its honesty.

## **Appendix**

### **Step by step**

#### **A creative explication**

Starting in 2008 with my MA thesis in Media, I had a dilemma on my hands: what was I going to write about? Thinking of a variety of subjects and knowing that the idea I chose had to be something I was passionate about if I was going to research and write about it in the depth that I knew was required. So, I looked into a few things: the dark underworld of gothic Cape Town, the day in the life of an advertising exec, something to do with travel writing...my ideas were wide-ranging and to be honest, not as practical or possible as I would have liked. And then, in early February, as I was starting to consider turning to a research thesis instead of the creative project I had been hoping to do, we adopted Star from the SPCA.

Through the time I spent at the adoption kennels looking for a dog, I began to realise that here was a perfect topic to write about: animals. Not only do I love animals (and I do mean all kinds), but I have always been interested in the ethics surrounding their treatment. So there I was, with an idea, and a window into a story. I contacted the SPCA PR department the next day and made an appointment to see Cher, the lady who runs the department. On my first meeting with Cher, I was relieved to find that the SPCA was accommodating and happy to allow me to spend time with their investigative department to see what kind of stories I could find there. Cher informed me that she'd arrange for me to shadow Wayne Hector, one of their best and most active inspectors. I was to pitch up on the day (a Monday) at around eight o'clock.

On the day, I made sure that I was ready – a pen, notebook and camera stuffed into my bag. Little did I realise how much of an impact that day would have on me. Wayne and I hit it off from the beginning, which was better than I had expected. He proved to be insightful and considerate and ready to give me a good idea of how the SPCA worked. I learnt that the SPCA was running with only 6 qualified inspectors in Cape Town with very few vehicles. This means that the inspectors are on call 24 hours a day and often neglect to look after themselves because they are so busy.

Witnessing a bunny stuck in a car engine (yep, it climbed in there to escape a dog), the death of a sickly cow, the terrible suffering of some pit bulls in Grassy Park, as well as a number of other canine incidents in Brooklyn, left me reeling, unsure of how much I should write. I decided to work around the death of the cow and add in two other incidents to highlight the difficulties that both the inspectors and the people who own the animals come up against. The main message I wanted to convey is that these are everyday events – Wayne and the other inspectors see mistreatment of animals every day and it's not because people are 'bad', but rather because they are desperately poor or lacking in education or both.

I had a story, and a direction: I started asking the question 'what makes people mistreat animals?' and found that the answer was long and complex. I realised that I wasn't only dealing with animals anymore. The SPCA had illustrated that it was dealing with people as much as it was dealing with animals. My biggest regret about my SPCA article is that I didn't take any pictures! I had a camera with me, but never used it, so overwhelmed and caught up in the drama of the day was I.

My next article was inspired by dear Bubbles, my 88-year-old neighbour. Having worked for the Animal Anti-Cruelty League as an administrator her whole life, Bubbles is deeply involved in the field. I went along to visit the centre in Epping 2, but found that aside from the fact that it was badly

organised since it relies mostly on volunteer help, the centre was also too close in philosophy and aim to the SPCA. Right next door, however, was the Cart Horse Protection Association (CHPA), which did set off my curiosity. I had seen cart horses on the roads in Cape Town, but never thought that there would be an entire Association dedicated to them. This was something I had to investigate further.

Contacting Carl, the administrator there, I was surprised at how efficiently run the organisation was in comparison to its canine/feline counterpart next door. Carl put me in touch with Managing Director Dee Terblanche, and gave me a hint to mention the significance of women in the animal welfare world to win her over. If anything got me that meeting, I'm sure Carl's tip did.

Dee was interested in meeting with me first to talk over what it is that the CHPA does. Meeting with Dee was hugely beneficial to my entire project. She clarified the difference between animal welfare and animal rights (phrases that I was using interchangeably). She gave me much of her time, discussing the significance of women inspectors in a male dominated industry (since most carties are men), as well as discussing the relationship of the Association with other organisations such as the SPCA. I even attended the CHPA's AGM the following Tuesday and realised then that the Association has a strong backing from Cape Town residents. I was able to watch the interaction between the inspectors and other employees and get a better idea of their personalities.

I had a lot of information, but needed to spend time on the road with the inspectors, so the next step was going out with Diana Trufter, the CHPA head inspector. Diana proved to be a tougher interviewee than Wayne Hector or Dee Terblanche. This may partly be because Diana is the same age as my mother, as well as from a traditional Afrikaans background, which means that politeness and respect was the order of the day. This wasn't the only challenge. I had to earn Diana's trust too

as her previous experiences with journalists were quite negative, so she told me. I do believe, however, that the time I had spent with Dee, as well as meeting Diana at the AGM served to my advantage and it was not long before I was able to gain some insight into the way that Diana works and how she sees life.

My third and last article choice was difficult at first. I looked into a few different angles. The one was a story on the Tygervalley Zoo – what better way to bring up animal welfare issues than through the focus on a zoo? I spoke to a man who reportedly deals with PR at the zoo, but his attitude towards me bordered on extreme suspicion. Zoos are notoriously unpopular with animal rights groups, and it is understandable that he may have been cautious about speaking with me for this reason. Whatever his reason, every time we made an appointment to meet, he would cancel it or happen to have ‘taken the day off’ in the words of his secretary. Giving this story option up for dead, I decided to look to a more topical one -- one that had in fact been in the news quite a lot in recent days: bunny rabbits on Robben Island. I emailed Kira Joshua, the head inspector of the SPCA Wildlife unit to find out whether she would be able to help me. She redirected me to Cape Nature which was regrettably too busy dealing with the bunny-culling controversy to have a pesky journo student tagging along. Most disappointing, and another dead-end.

I moved on to another idea that I had heard of called Spayathons. They are as dreadful as they sound – the idea being that a vet and a whole bunch of volunteers (veterinary nurses and anyone who will help) go along to a location like Sir Lowrys in Gordon’s Bay, and spay and neuter as many animals as they can get their hands on in order to counter the growing problem of stray dogs and feral cats (and the diseases they carry). I spoke to Nicky from MediPet, a pet insurance scheme. She was extremely accommodating at the time, but unfortunately, I still await a call from her to notify me of the next spayathon to take place in Cape Town.

Enter my fourth option: baboons. Again I approached Kira Joshua of the SPCA. Wayne had suggested I contact them to get an idea of how their wildlife inspectors worked since they were dealing with animals found on the mountain ranges as well as marine life – a vast subject to cover. I was surprised when Joshua mentioned baboons. “They’re a huge welfare issue in Cape Town,” she said -- a perfect topic to focus on regarding my overall project (which, thanks to Dee Terblanche, was now ‘Animal Welfare’). Kira Joshua put me in contact with Jenni Trethowan, founder of Baboon Matters to whom I sent a long email right away, explaining my story idea, and sat back to await a reply...and wait, and wait. The moral of this story is to pick up the phone and call if you need an answer straight away and, as I dialled the number, I was preparing myself for a similar reception to the one I had received from the Tygervalley Zoo. Yet, Jenni was anything but chilly. Apologising for not getting back to me via email, she arranged for us to meet.

Having called the day before to confirm our appointment, I arrived at the organisation’s offices in Glencairn, Simon’s Town ready to spend a day with Jenni and the staff at Baboon Matters. But things going according to plan, I am beginning to realise, is a rare thing in the world of the journalist (and possibly the world of animal welfare too). Jenni was off sick, suffering from an attack of hayfever. As I was about to give up hope, and start to take up panicking as a sport, Chris Trethowan, her son and employee asked if I was happy to interview him. This was a great opportunity and I realised that getting some perspective from someone who had been watching from the sidelines since its inception and who was now working at the organisation, might prove to be very worthwhile.

Not only did Chris prove an invaluable interviewee, I found that because he was the same age as me, we were able to do away with the social etiquette that I had found to be a barrier in other interviews.

Chris was at ease with the idea that I was a journalist – Baboon Matters deals with a number of journalists from publications such as *Cape Times* and those community publications from *Caxton*. The interviews with him were all without pretence. Perhaps this better interviewing was also the result of the vast practise and experience I had with previous pieces, but I feel that the fieldwork and writing of the article on Baboon Matters was far smoother for me than the previous two.

The journey of learning proved rich throughout the writing of this project. One thing I learnt during my fieldwork was to take pictures with that camera I had so diligently packed into my bag on that first meeting with Wayne Hector from the SPCA. The more I went into the field, the more I have taken advantage of snapping away. As a result, I have included some of the photographs I took whilst on the road with Diana Trufter from the CHPA and Chris Trethowan from Baboon Matters. I could kick myself for being too bashful to take pictures during my SPCA stint.



Here are two pictures of Simba and Diana Trufter. You can see how uncomfortable that gash must be for him. He struggled to chew his cud properly, which concerned Colin Starfield, the vet at the Blue Cross in Newlands.





Hear no, Speak no, See no and another juvenile playing Spiderman on the side of the cliff while one of the strapping males (Anele) sits lazily in the sun, staring out over Ocean View.

**Fieldwork contacts**

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**CHPA**

Dee Terblanche

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Chrisopher Trethowan

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