

## Engaging the Animal in the Moving Image

### ABSTRACT

Human engagement with nonhuman animals in motion pictures is a complex process that anthropomorphism and identification misconstrue. A superior model comes from cognitive theories of how spectators engage characters, particularly Smith (1995), who suggests modifications to account for the nuances of spectator engagement with nonhuman animal characters. The central components of this amended model include the person schema, the three types of cues that films use to activate the person schema, and what Smith calls the "Structure of Sympathy." Such a model enables us to understand better the role that moving image representations of nonhuman animals play in human-animal relationships.

A familiar account of the human experience of non-human animals conceives animal existence as gradually disappearing from daily life in the nineteenth century when a pastoral rural existence in harmony with nature gave way to an industrialized urban life (Berger, 1977; Lippit, 2000). As Wilbert (2000) puts it, ". . . as various commentators have stated, animals have in many ways seemingly vanished from the lives of humans. Animals have become marginalized" (p. 243). No longer would most humans experience the raising of chickens for eggs or cows for

milk. No longer would most humans experience the lives and deaths of cows, pigs, chickens, or lambs. As industrialization collected human labor to build and operate its machines, it collected animal bodies that it dissected, packaged, and distributed as commodity forms that efface their origins. By now, most humans experience animals not as embodied beings with personal wishes but as disembodied commodities with side dishes.

According to this narrative, representations such as moving image media of nonhuman animals matter because they are a common way that humans experience nonhumans as embodied wholes. Of course, such an account favors uses of animals as livestock over uses of animals as companions in need of care or as wildlife in need of management. It also omits activities such as bird watching and other forms of recreation that involve direct encounters between humans and other animals. A question that it raises, however, remains: How might the moving image ameliorate this loss of connection between the human and nonhuman? However, nostalgia about this lost connection, as it does elsewhere, forgets as much as it recalls. Why not pursue how the moving image might encourage the formation of a human-animal relationship characterized by respect and mutually beneficial reciprocation?

Toward this end, two foundational questions of nonhuman representation arise: "How does the representation invite spectators to construct nonhuman beings as persons" and "How does the representation invite spectators to take up nonhuman perspectives?" This essay proposes answers that aim to supersede the paradigms of anthropomorphism and identification, both of which persist despite their underestimation of the complexity of audience engagement with animals in the movies. Although anthropomorphism focuses on errors of attributing distinctly human traits to nonhuman entities, the emphasis on personhood here takes a more generally constructionist approach (Herda-Rapp & Goedeke, 2005) to attend to how works invite audiences to conceive of animals. Studying personhood allows that such constructions might be erroneous but does not make such considerations a central concern.

Cognitive models of film spectatorship are diverse but generally contend that movies cue and constrain spectator response without exhaustively determining it (Anderson, 1996; Bordwell, 1985, 1989; Branigan, 1992). According to Smith (1995), movies do not "suture" viewers into an inevitable

“identification” with a preferred character, a model that human-nonhuman studies would also do well to abandon because it would seem to exclude the possibility of feeling for a nonhuman when a human is available. Instead, movies invite spectators to make emotional and intellectual investments in their stories and construction of character, regardless of species. Cognitive models of spectatorship acknowledge the potential of a work to provoke more-or-less congruent responses and more-or-less divergent responses that neglect or resist such invitations.

A congruent response to *Birth of a Nation* (1915), for example, would accept its racist sentiments while a divergent one would resist them. A work might invite thoroughly racist, or speciesist, views, but a spectator need not adopt them. Rather than predicting inevitable responses, a cognitive model conceptualizes how representations invite spectators to expand or modify their schemata, or frameworks of understanding the world. Even a work that encourages spectators to adopt a nonhuman perspective and cues them to construct the nonhuman as person might have little impact on the schema that they apply in everyday life. Alternatively, however, moving images of animals are a promising arena for inviting spectators to modify their schemata to understand nonhuman creatures as embodied beings who exhibit features of personhood. Although a thorough case for cognitive film theory in Human-Animal studies exceeds my purpose here, in general it offers superior models of spectatorship, emotional engagement (Leibowitz, 1996; Neill, 1996; Plantinga & Smith, 1999; Smith 2003), and ideological and moral values (Plantinga, 1997; Smith, 1999) without requiring a commitment to philosophical traditions that devalue nonhuman existence.

## **Prospects for Nonhuman Personhood**

In their recent anthology, Daston and Mitman (2005) invite us to re-conceive anthropomorphism, an invitation also extended by Bateson and Klopfer (1991) and Philo and Wilbert (2000, pp. 14-20) and rejected by Kennedy (1992). In their introduction, Daston and Mitman cite the theory of evolution as troubling efforts, “. . . to draw a hard-and-fast line between humans and animals, since common descent and the gradual process of natural selection on random variation make it plausible to assume some continuity of traits, including psychological traits, among closely related species” (p. 3). Supporting

this view is Siegel (2005) whose essay in the Daston and Mitman anthology explains how her documentary about the rehabilitation of orangutans in Indonesian Borneo deliberately uses anthropomorphism, “. . . as a tool of communication and comparison rather than making explicit claims or dangerous and incorrect implications that the orangutan subjects are ‘just like us’” (p. 197). Siegel confesses that, in the course of making the film and spending time “with orangutans, the more firmly I was convinced that great apes possess intentionality, self-awareness, complex modes of communication, a theory of mind, a sense of humor, and a need for emotional support, as well as many other human-like traits” (p. 221). In addition, a theme of *The Disenchanted Forest* (2005) and other documentaries about primates, such as *The New Chimpanzees* (1995), is an acknowledgment of culture, long presumed to be exclusively human. Anthropomorphism as a one-size-fits-all concept fails to capture such nuances of being, reducing all differences, however inconsequential, to significant Difference. An alternative schema is personhood, which promises a greater attention to such nuances.

A precedent for studying nonhuman personhood comes from Mitman’s (2005) study in the same volume of advocacy for elephants in Amboseli National Park in Kenya. Mitman finds that the most effective advocacy identified individual elephants and emphasized “the mental and emotional life of elephants” (p. 190), the “complex social life and communication found among the elephants,” and “their moral status” (p. 191). This perspective personalized individuals with names and preferred to frame, both visually and figuratively, elephant individuals, pairs, or small groups. By contrast, less successful were framings that depersonalized elephants by showing them from a distance and defining them strictly as a population in need of management. The shift from seeing animals in terms of a population to seeing animals as persons will undoubtedly raise the specter of anthropomorphism for some, but personhood and individual existence are not distinctly human features and are therefore not anthropomorphic. Johnson (1993), who explores the implications of cognitive science for ethics, finds that many of the most pressing moral issues of our time “concern whether we should extend the scope of morality beyond our anthropocentric world to embrace other forms of life . . .” (p. 254). Johnson suggests that we begin to consider these issues by examining what counts as a “person.” As Johnson argues, “there is nothing fixed or absolute about our present way of determining who falls under the

category *person* . . . we might conceivably come up with good reasons (such as empirical studies of animals) for extending this status to nonhuman creatures" (p. 255). That the threshold of personhood should fall immediately below the human creatures in power is emphatically anthropocentric (Ingold, 1988, p. 6).

In effect, humanness functions as the "prestige" category of existence, reified by scientific discourse that defines its privileged status as an objective value (Colm-Hogan, 2001, p. 122). Colm-Hogan points out that the idea of prestige standards was originally applied to class differences, but it "applies equally to colonialist, racist, and other forms of hierarchy. In each case, the prestige category is a function of the preferences of the dominant group" (p. 122). Obviously, taking human being as the prestige category of being defines personhood in terms that favor humans. The standard for personhood becomes the ability to use complex verbal language—at which humans excel—rather than the ability to experience suffering—of which more beings are capable—a standard for personhood suggested by Bentham and Montaigne, whom Fudge (2006) contends, "makes the crucial distinction in his worldview not reason but sentience, not the ability to rationalize the world but the capacity to feel in it" (p. 103).

The most significant lesson in most mentions of anthropomorphism might be how vividly it expresses a deep cultural investment in maintaining the prestige standard of personhood and rejecting these alternative ethics. Fischer (1991), for example, finds that the accusation of anthropomorphism "by scientists and philosophers is often so casual as to suggest that it is a term of ideological abuse, rather like political or religious terms ("communist" or "counterrevolutionary") that need no explication or defense when used in criticism" (p. 49). Much use of the term in film criticism also fits this pattern. Fischer contends that "The charge of anthropomorphism oversimplifies a complex issue—animal consciousness—and it tries to inhibit consideration of positions that ought to be evaluated in a more open-minded and empirical manner" (p. 51). Of course, objections to anthropomorphism may be raised because it effectively silences the other by projecting human features onto it. As Siegel (2005) reflects on her production, *The Disenchanted Forest*,

Orangutans transformed into little 'people' offer few insights into the orangutan worldview. To understand orangutan cognition and behavior and come

closer to 'thinking with orangutans' or viewing the world from the other's point of view, we would do better to study orangutans who are at ease with a human a presence but have regained their own forest culture. (p. 205)

Unfortunately, most mentions of anthropomorphism fall into the "exclude animals from personhood" rather than the "respect animals for what they are" category. Maintenance of the prestige category of human being remains the dominant theme. Alternatively, personhood offers a less ideologically charged and more precise framework for research into representations of non-human animals in the movies.

If what counts as a person has varied historically and across cultures, as Johnson (1993) suggests, personhood must have a schematic and flexible structure. Accordingly, any definition must remain open to revision and responsive to debate about what constitutes personhood. Such a working definition comes from Smith (1995), who proposes a "person schema" of seven main components:

1. a discrete human body, individuated and continuous through time and space;
2. perceptual activity, including self-awareness;
3. intentional states, such as beliefs and desires;
4. emotions;
5. the ability to use and understand a natural language;
6. the capacity for self-impelled actions and self-interpretation; and
7. the potential for traits, or persisting attributes. (p. 21)

Smith (1995) argues that characters who exhibit these components cue spectators to activate the schema and test the hypothesis that they are persons. Smith's person schema fits the widely accepted contention that framing women not as individual and continuous bodies but as body parts, in commercials and music videos for example, depersonalizes or objectifies them. Such a case applies equally well to the framing of nonhuman animal subjects as body parts (or worse). Smith's inclusion of perceptual abilities also suggests an explanation for the commonplace of depicting the eyes of nonhuman animals (Burt, 2002). Significantly, schema application is not a question of necessary and sufficient conditions as a strict definition might be. Rather, schemata are applied for their explanatory value, which is a matter of more or less.

Clearly, this schema of personhood sets human being as the benchmark, which then extends to other beings. McReynolds (2004) objects to such an “extension model of moral standing” (p. 63), but Smith is modeling likely spectator comprehension rather than evaluating its ethics. Along these lines, Smith ventures that spectators make sense of nonhuman agency with the person schema:

... human agency functions as an heuristic in explaining non-human agency, in that we often make sense of non-human agency using the person schema. Animal heroes, for example, have bodies, intentional states, emotions, the capacity for self-impelled action, and physiological and dispositional traits. They cannot communicate verbally but they manage through other means. Enough of the person schema holds for the sake of an imaginative project in which an animal features as a major agent. (p. 24)

The “imaginative project” of which Smith (1995) speaks is the study of spectator engagement with nonhuman characters. In other words, Smith defines the circumstances in which human viewers engage nonhuman characters even though his examples illustrate how they engage human characters. For Smith, viewers make sense of nonhuman personhood in movies by extending the person schema, much as they do in everyday life. In general, cognitive film theory emphasizes the correspondences between everyday comprehension and comprehension of moving images. As previously mentioned, personhood is an affordance that viewers are invited, not required, to recognize. An inference of personhood might obtain or it might not; some will fail to attribute personhood to a nonhuman even if extensively cued to do so. Cultural factors are inevitably involved, and individual viewers might accept or reject nonhuman personhood for a variety of reasons. Such variations encourage an emphasis not on the psychology of individual spectators but on “films as complex functioning artifacts,” as Freeland (1996, p. 205) suggests in her work on feminist frameworks for analyzing horror films.

## **Cues of Nonhuman Personhood**

Within the complex artifact that is any moving image medium, makers supply or fail to supply the elements of the person schema, thus cueing or constraining an inference of personhood with regard to a particular character.

The main adaptation of Smith (1995) that this essay proposes is that cues of nonhuman personhood take three complementary forms: primary, secondary external, and secondary internal. In brief, primary cues invite the attribution of personhood to a nonhuman character performed by a nonhuman, secondary external cues assert nonhuman personhood through a human character or narrator, and secondary internal cues come from the human performance of the nonhuman. Admittedly, human and nonhuman performers differ in important ways, but ultimately filmmakers use devices of lighting, editing, scoring, and cues of personhood to construct nonhuman personhood through the nonhuman performer as they do human personhood through a human performer. The filmmaker as a factor in the presence or absence of cues of nonhuman personhood remains implied rather than overt and is the subject of a later section.

Primary cues dominate in the opening scenes of *The Bear* (1989) when no additional character or narrator indicates that the young bear cub is agitated by the death of his mother. Instead, his emotional state of distress is apparent in his voice and behavior: He cries, he paws at her body, he spends the night by her side. What defines any primary cue is the invitation to attribute elements of personhood to a nonhuman character based on the performance of the nonhuman rather than on the explicit guidance of another character or narrator. The primary form of cueing personhood allows the greatest contribution from the nonhuman performer (Philo & Wilbert, 2000, p. 5) and, because the work offers no verbal prompt, requires the greatest contribution from the spectator in terms of generating an attribution of personhood. Primary cues by themselves thus likely tend to confirm pre-existing conceptions of nonhuman personhood.

Typically, filmmakers complement primary cues with secondary ones, which involve a human intermediary who asserts features of nonhuman personhood. Many such cues are external to the nonhuman character. For example, in the silent film *Rescued by Rover* (1905) a human character recognizes a Collie's capacity to communicate when he follows Rover to rescue a kidnapped infant. In *Clash of the Wolves* (1925), a human character explicitly assigns intentional states to wolves when he ventures that they came down from the mountains to find food after a forest fire. In *Babe* (1995), a voice-over narrator, performed by a human and presumed to be human, describes

the emotions and intentional states of Babe, a pig. Of course, according to the universe of Babe, the narrator need not be human. Nonhuman characters performed in part by humans also attribute features of personhood to Babe, as when Fly (Miriam Margolyes), a Border Collie, talks about how Babe misses his mother.

In sum, such external, secondary cues to recognize nonhuman personhood come via a character or a narrator outside of the nonhuman character. So far, the proposal is that filmmakers might cultivate an inference of personhood through primary cues from a nonhuman character and through secondary, external cues that channel through a human intermediary. In *Lassie Come Home* (1943), cues of nonhuman personhood come from two main sources: views of Pal, a collie, performing Lassie and human characters commenting and reacting to Lassie. But what of other animal characters who are performed by humans in body, voice, or other means? What of Babe, performed in body by piglets, in voice by humans, and in mouth by computer-generated imagery designed by humans? A further division of secondary cues is necessary to describe such hybrid cases.

A useful distinction can be made between secondary cues that are external to the nonhuman animal performance, as when characters treat Lassie as a person, and those that are internal, as in cases where a human contributes to the performance of the nonhuman character. Internal, secondary cues thus include instances in which humans don animal costumes, invest nonhuman characters with human voices, or animate nonhuman performance in whole or in part. In *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), Bert Lahr performs the role of the Cowardly Lion in both body and voice; only the very impressionable would take him for a real lion or attribute his behavior to lions. Similarly, Bugs Bunny is a composite of human voice and animation that takes little advantage of primary cues; that is, Bugs bears little resemblance to a naturalistic rabbit. Fewer internal, secondary cues combine in *Jumanji* (1995), which creates a naturalistic lion character from robotics and animation but withholds a human voice in favor of a lion one. Internal, secondary cues vanish in favor of external, secondary ones in *Born Free* (1966), where human characters and a human voice-over consistently invite us to construct the lioness Elsa as an individual. An infinite number of combinations are conceivable, from the preponderance of internal secondary cues in the Cowardly Lion of *The*

*Wizard of Oz* to the mixture of primary and secondary external ones in *Born Free*. In some cases, the distinction between primary and secondary internal cues is admittedly tenuous, as in *The Bear*, where bear cub vocalizations might plausibly be either bear or human in origin.

Modeling cues of nonhuman personhood as primary, secondary external, and secondary internal suggests a continuum along which the inference of the nonhuman as person gives way to the inference of the nonhuman as human and therefore person. Put another way, as secondary internal cues grow dominant, the nonhuman becomes, in effect, human. In such cases, secondary internal cues constrain the inference of the nonhuman and therefore limit any attribution of personhood to the nonhuman aspects of the character. The nonhuman character attains personhood but only by assimilating the prestige standard of human personhood. Rather than being discrete ends of a spectrum, however, primary and secondary internal cues blend as nonhuman and human performances combine to create a single nonhuman character. Figure 1 offers a model of these relationships and their likely consequences.

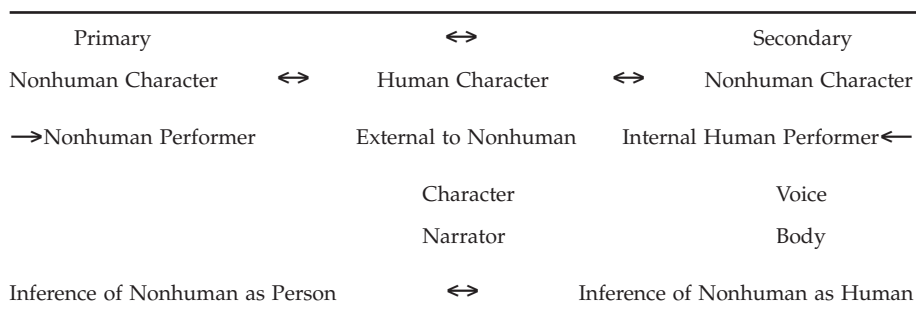


Figure 1. Cues of nonhuman personhood.

On the hypothesis that a preponderance of internal secondary cues will tend to invite the inference of the nonhuman as human rather than as person, the popular device of giving human voice to nonhumans is likely a mixed bag in terms of cueing the inference of personhood. On the one hand, a human voice can serve the very important function of cueing spectators to construct a single nonhuman character from the performances of multiple actors, a commonplace in feature films with central animal characters. Such invest-

ments of human abilities have some justification as they suggest the aim of adapting the representation of nonhumans to a human audience. In other words, filmmakers have animals talk so that a human audience can understand them. A recent entry into the “talking animal” genre is *Good Boy* (2003), a dog from outer space yarn in which an adolescent boy learns to understand dog-speak. The scenario therefore defines the limited communicative abilities of dogs not as the failure of dogs to talk but as the failure of humans to understand. Such a use suggests that human speech from the mouths of nonhumans might simply express the idea that nonhumans communicate.

On the other hand, a drawback of human vocalizations is that they diminish what viewers might learn from the experience of primary cues from a nonhuman performer. Investments of human abilities undercut the inference of nonhuman personhood as the representation moves from inviting the spectator to construct nonhuman beings as persons to inviting the spectator to construct the nonhuman as human. One corollary here is how foreign-language speakers in American films typically speak accented English, regardless of implausibility, rather than, say, French or Japanese. Another is how the aliens in science fictions are so often essentially humanoid. Such patterns tell us more about the limits of human imagination than they do about what might actually be out there. Similarly, talking dogs tell us more about the human talkers than the dogs. By conforming to a human audience, such representations risk failing to engage the nonhuman and their “native” communicative abilities. Such overt anthropomorphisms create an endless feedback loop of human constructions in which the nonhuman as nonhuman has no place.

## **The Structure of Sympathy**

A fuller understanding of how filmmakers create movies to cue spectators to construct nonhuman characters as persons can be had by combining the cues of nonhuman personhood with Smith’s (1995) model of how spectators engage characters in the “structure of sympathy.” Smith writes:

I want to propose that fictional narrations elicit three levels of imaginative engagement with characters, distinct types of responses normally conflated under the term ‘identification’. Together, these levels of engagement comprise

the 'structure of sympathy'. In this system, spectators construct characters (a process I refer to as *recognition*). Spectators are also provided with visual and aural information more or less congruent with that available to characters, and so are placed in a certain structure of *alignment* with characters. In addition, spectators evaluate characters on the basis of the values they embody, and hence form more-or-less sympathetic or more-or-less antipathetic *allegiances* with them. (p. 75)

A brief illustration of Smith's model of spectator engagement with characters in *Babe* (1995) suggests its usefulness. Recognition involves the simple construction of a character as when viewers see Babe as a single character from scene to scene (even though over 30 piglets performed the role). Assisting the audience to recognize Babe are the secondary internal cues of a human voice and a small toupee. Alignment in *Babe* comes mainly from a consistent spatial alignment with his character; the plot follows Babe throughout, from nursing from his mother to his winning the shepherding contest. The narrative follows the cause and effect chain of his coming of age, gaining social acceptance, and essentially finding a surrogate father. In this, *Babe* closely follows what Bousé (2000, p. 136) calls the "foolproof plot." In addition, *Babe* is sometimes perceptually aligned via a point of view shot with Babe, as when he looks up at Hoggett (James Cromwell) and the film cuts to a close up of Hoggett from Babe's perspective. Consistent alignment with a character cultivates allegiance, which Smith defines as attraction to, or repulsion from, a character. In the case of *Babe*, following Babe and learning of his admirable traits, which a voice-over narrator and other characters often make explicit, attract us to Babe and encourage the hope that he will succeed.

Filmmakers may also complicate cues of nonhuman personhood within the structure of sympathy (Smith, 1995). *The Edge* (1997), for example, aligns throughout with Charles (Anthony Hopkins) and his friends who become lost in the wilderness and struggle to escape. Opposing them is a bear (Bart), who pursues them as food. In terms of plot, the film invites a negative allegiance with the bear because he interferes with the goal of Charles the protagonist. As moments of alignment with the bear are long enough only to establish an impending attack, few primary cues of personhood are available. Secondary external cues come from Charles, who explicitly assigns perceptual activity, intentional states, and superior intelligence to the bear. Such

factors construct the bear as a person, but mostly to sketch a dangerous antagonist who single-mindedly pursues the humans.

An alternative structure of sympathy is evident in Wiseman's *Primate* (1974), a film about an animal research facility. As its polysemous title suggests, *Primate* distributes its alignment fairly evenly among human experimenters and their nonhuman subjects. In addition, an absence of explanatory voice-over or titles renders the procedures of its humans mysterious at best and cruel at worst. Compounding this impression is the framing of individual scenes, which often favors the primate subjects over the primate experimenters. Several scenes frame monkeys—expressions of fear and resistance on their faces—from the waist or shoulders up as human hands reach in from out of frame to manipulate them or worse. Such framings personalize the monkeys and depersonalize the humans. Unlike *The Edge* (1997), recognition in *Primate* is difficult, alignment favors no one, and allegiances are complicated and ambiguous.

Beyond the basic level of recognition, alignment and allegiance invite viewers to take up the perspective and interests of both human and nonhuman characters, a request that invites the attribution of personhood to them. In short, audience members cannot root for Babe to succeed without acknowledging that he has features of personhood such as intentional and emotional states. Adding the model of primary, secondary external, and secondary internal cues of personhood describes whether the inference of personhood comes from human or nonhuman aspects in the performance of the nonhuman. Primary and secondary external cues of nonhuman personhood have the potential to become mutually affirming allegiances that build and clarify one another, as in *Babe* when Farmer Hoggett remarks on elements of personhood in Babe. Smith (1995) describes the affordance of such multiple points of sympathy as "imaginative mobility" (p. 235).

This complex process of spectator engagement with character and the construction of nonhuman personhood is at play in *Lassie Come Home* (1943). Primary and secondary external cues dominate as eye level views of Lassie, which align us with her, alternate with shots of human characters who comment on her exceptional traits and abilities. After a rolling title dedicating the film to Major Eric Knight, the author of the source book, the opening scene frames long shots of Lassie (Pal) and Sam Carraclough (Donald Crisp)

as they walk through a field and into town. After a couple of transitional shots, the scene settles into a medium long shot of Sam and some villagers talking about how Lassie is the greatest dog ever in Yorkshire. One villager kneels down into a two shot with Lassie and delivers a speech in praise of her. The scene then returns to the medium long shot of the group. After the talk turns to hard times (they can't afford beef), Lassie begins whining and the film frames a profile bust shot even with her that is reminiscent of the shot with the villager.

A repetitive musical phrase begins, one that becomes a motif for reminding spectators of Lassie's agitated state. The scene cuts to a bust shot of Sam, who says "It's Joe she's thinking of at school." The villagers ask whether she's ever been late and Sam says that she hasn't: "There seems to be something inside of her telling her when it's time." The scene builds suspense by adding a shot of a clock tower to an alternating series that includes the bust shot of Lassie, the bust shot of Joe, a two-shot that includes the villager who praised Lassie, and the shot of the group. Finally, the music changes to a light melody when Sam releases Lassie and she exits the group shot. All turn to watch her go. What follows approximates their view as the camera tilts up to frame Lassie as she runs off. A reaction shot shows the butcher checking his watch and nodding in approval. Another reaction shot shows a cobbler seconding the approving nod. The scene returns to the view of Lassie running away, now in the distance and much smaller in the frame. The film then cuts to a new scene, aligning with Joe (Roddy McDowall), a boy who waits anxiously for the school day to end. After the school bell rings, Joe rushes outside and greets Lassie, who then carries his books.

In these early stages of the narrative, alignment with Sam and Lassie and then Joe and Lassie invites the audience to share their affection for one another. After Joe's parents sell Lassie because they are desperate for money, alignment favors Lassie as she repeatedly escapes from her pen so that she can meet Joe at school—actions that imply intentional states and emotions. As in the opening scene, the affordance of primary cues from Lassie is affirmed by secondary cues from characters who remark about Lassie's love for the boy and desire to be with him. After Joe and Lassie are separated again, this time by a much greater distance, the film alternates scenes between them. Most of the film aligns spatially with Lassie on her arduous journey to return to

Joe and demonstrates her determination as she crosses rivers and perseveres even after a sheep farmer's bullet.

Significantly, *Lassie Comes Home* typically eschews perceptual alignment with characters, reserving the point of view shot for crucial moments, such as Lassie's view of a dogcatcher menacing her with a tether. In addition, although she finds numerous hospitable homes on her journey, Lassie continues until she reaches Joe. Such narrative events make clear that Lassie's motivation isn't basic needs, such as food and shelter, but a more personal desire to be with Joe. Such are the makings, not of simple instinct, but of personhood, and numerous human characters encourage us through word and action to take up Lassie's part if we are initially reluctant to consider the interests of a mere dog. In sum, *Lassie Come Home* combines the affordance of primary cues from Lassie with the affordance of secondary cues from numerous human characters who model respect for Lassie and companionship with her.

## Conclusion

The person schema and the affordance of primary, secondary external, and secondary internal cues of personhood answer the question, "How does the representation invite the spectator to construct nonhuman beings as persons?" Primary cues build directly through nonhuman characters performed by nonhumans. Secondary external cues build through characters and narrators outside the nonhuman character. Secondary internal cues build from human performance of the nonhuman character in body, voice, or some other means. Further subdivisions are not essential to understanding the basic contours of how a motion picture might invite an audience to construct a nonhuman character as a person. The cues of nonhuman personhood combine with the structure of sympathy to answer the question, "How does the representation invite the spectator to take up the nonhuman perspective?" Asking these two questions presumes that representations of nonhumans will be valuable as agents of interspecies communication, insofar as they invite the audience to imaginatively take up the perspectives of nonhuman beings without turning them into humans. Such complex models of spectatorship insist on the diversity of potential responses to a film and provide a necessary first step in understanding how invitations to attribute personhood to nonhumans

at the movies might prompt viewers to extend such considerations to non-humans in everyday life.

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## Note

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