

The Intersectional Influences of Prince: A Human-Animal Tribute

Annie Potts

New Zealand Centre for Human-Animal Studies, University of Canterbury

Featuring (in order of appearance) Nichola Kriek, Dinesh Wadiwel, Tora Holmberg, Kirsty Dunn, Susan McHugh and Donelle Gadenne

***Abstract:** Prince Rogers Nelson (1958-2016) was best known for his joyful funk music and electrifying stage performances that transgressed normative representations of gender, sexuality, race, spirituality, identity and taste. He was also a compassionate person who held deep convictions about freedom and the right of all species to enjoy lives without fear and suffering. This essay discusses Prince's intersectional influences – the various ways his virtuosity over the past 38 years disrupted binaries, challenged assumptions and stereotypes, advocated for social justice, and combatted speciesism in its many forms. Embedded within the essay are seven personal tributes written by fans of Prince who are also animal activists and/or scholars in Critical Animal Studies. These 'memorial solos' convey how, for each contributor, Prince's music, image, performativity, compassion and empathy inspired animal advocacy in everyday life.*

***Keywords:** Prince Rogers Nelson, animals, veg*nism, antispeciesism, funk music, black masculinity, active female sexuality*

'It's all about thinking in new ways, tuning in 2 a new frequency'
– Prince, 1999.¹

When I woke on the morning of April 22nd and heard the news of Prince Rogers Nelson's sudden death at fifty-seven, his body having been found in an elevator at his Paisley Park compound in Chanhassen Minnesota sometime during New Zealand's night, it felt like a direct blow to my heart. Once the initial shock settled a little, I found myself walking around my local harbour-side path with my soul-dog, Tippy, ruminating on the profound sense of loss I was experiencing, and trying to understand why this seemed so raw and personal. Prince was a musical superstar, one of the icons of 1980s popular culture, and he had been a constant positive influence in my life since my early twenties. I turned to Facebook to see how others were responding to this artist's unexpected early death, and witnessed a steady stream of posts by people from diverse backgrounds and locations expressing shock and sadness. I also noticed that colleagues and friends associated with Human-Animal Studies, in particular, seemed to be as distressed as I was.

Prince is of course best known for his transgressive creativity – especially his provocative music, dancing and performances subverting normative notions of gender, sexuality, race, identity and spirituality – but over his career less attention has been paid to his commitment to antispeciesism and environmental advocacy. Even after his death, when more about his quiet, yet generous, philanthropy was revealed, Prince's affection for nonhuman animals and dedication to a plant-based diet were almost entirely absent from media reports.² Former

¹ Prince, quoted in Tsioulcas.

² People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) did publish an on-line tribute to Prince shortly after his death, which focused on his animal activism. See Lindsay Pollard-Post, 'The Animal Kingdom has Lost its Prince'. Since his death, it has come to light that Prince's quiet philanthropic activities included helping to establish and support, among other causes, YesWeCode (an organization that trains minority youth in America to find jobs in the tech industry), PARSA (Physiotherapy and Rehabilitative

Smiths' frontsperson Morrissey, an outspoken animal activist, addressed this omission on his own website:

Although [he was] a long-serving vegan and a strong advocate of the abolition of the abattoir, neither of these points was mentioned in the one hundred television reports that I witnessed yesterday as they covered the enchanted life and sad death of Prince... He would be thanked not only by humans but also animals for living his lyrical life as he did.³

While this essay discusses Prince's intersectional influences – the way his work over the past thirty-eight years created new musical styles and challenged binaries – it departs from the vast majority of tributes that have emerged in the wake of his death by addressing his music and beliefs about non-violence and compassionate human-animal relationships. Appearing within the body of this work are what I've termed 'memorial solos': each contains a memoir written by an HAS scholar and animal advocate for whom Prince's music, image, performativity, compassion and empathy, has influenced their own creative processes and/or activism.

Support for Afghanistan), and Green For All (an agency promoting a green economy and the elevation of people from poverty).

³ See Kreps, 'Morrissey, 'Prince is the Royal that People Love'.

Memorial Solo # 1

I grew up in the 1970s and early 1980s in a working class *Pākehā*⁴ home based in a conservative rural city at the very bottom of Te Wai Pounamu (the South Island), Aotearoa New Zealand – about as far from Minneapolis and African-American pop music culture as you could get. My father was a non-religious ‘kiwi bloke’ who loved rugby, cricket and beer, and who had trained to be a fighter pilot during WWII; while my mother, twelve years younger than him, was a fierce socialist and a ‘free spirit’ who believed in reincarnation and the power of affirmations. This environment of opposites may have primed me to ‘dig Prince’, whose music transgresses musical boundaries, gender and sexuality norms, ideas about spirituality and the mundane, and anthropocentrism. While living with my parents, the only rebellion against the conventions of my hometown that I enacted was the refusal to eat meat, which began at age five when one of the hens we kept in our backyard was served as dinner. I was fortunate that my omnivorous parents (my mother later became vegetarian in her fifties) did not obstruct but rather nurtured my growing vegetarian beliefs and practices. Nevertheless I didn’t know any other vegetarians until I was twenty-one, when I left home to travel. I’m grateful to India for introducing me to vegetarianism on a grand scale, and to a market in Delhi for initiating me to Prince’s ‘music of positivity’ via a bootlegged version of *Sign o’ the Times* in cassette form, which I played nonstop on my Walkman around India, Nepal and Thailand. I was immediately enamoured by the funky-sexy-funny-serious music Prince created for this album – I hadn’t heard anything like it. This double album was a call to celebrate physicality (through dance, song, sensuality and sexuality), and it also included pensive songs reflecting on the troubles of the world in the mid-80s; importantly, it compelled the listener to reimagine gender, sexuality, race, power, and relationships.

One word sums up Prince’s initial influence on this self-conscious shy woman from a conservative town: emancipation. His music was both the catalyst of and accompaniment to my

⁴ Pākehā refers to a non-Māori New Zealander of European descent.

subsequent years of gender, sexuality and political exploration. I was riveted by his gender-blurring sartorial style, electrifying performances, and subversive lyrics. My favourite Prince songs have always been those that use humour playfully to disrupt orthodox notions of ‘manliness’ and ‘femininity’, as well as normative (hetero)sexuality, mind and body, and the sacred and profane. Prince created songs that spoke of physical pleasures beyond simplistic binaries; his music generated in me a sense of confidence to wear otherness and eccentricity proudly and strongly (sometimes just before delivering a lecture I still play Prince to access that sense of confidence his songs provided back in my twenties). Much of his music disrupts tired imperatives about active masculinity versus passive femininity: the women in his tales about lust and love are, if anything, more knowing and assertive about their sexual pleasures than their male counterpart (ie Prince). They are independent women who take charge of their own desires and encounters. African-American journalist and multi-instrumentalist Questlove argues that Prince’s music possesses a Shakespearean narrative arc, involving rising action, comic relief, climax and denouement. If this is the case, it is a feminist Shakespearean narrative arc, more often subverting the expected masculinist climax in favour of (or in the service of) a woman’s sexual power and ‘satisfaction’. In my own life, Prince’s unapologetic celebration of non-normative gender, sensuality and carnality, inspired me proactively to seek someone and something different in an intimate relationship. It is perhaps no wonder that I now thrive in a long-term partnership with a vegan Shakespearean Animal-Studies scholar who is like a man who is like a woman who is like a man who is like a woman.

But Prince’s transgressive music has meant much more to me than affective or embodied liberation from conventional gender, sexual and relationship norms: he was vegan before I became vegan, the lyrics to his songs on albums from the late 1980s onwards reflecting his belief in compassion for all species and a concern for the fate of the planet. In these tracks listeners are invited to question and rethink the human-animal divide and anthropocentrism. Discovering his devotion to antispeciesism was another cause for celebration of Prince’s creative influence on my life.

Although his music compelled me to question assumptions and conventions in my early adult life – even prompting me to complete doctoral research which deconstructed the inside/outside dichotomy in representations and practices of heterosex – it wasn’t until 2012 that I actually got to see Prince performing live in Brisbane and also experience one of his legendary after-parties

known for their musical improvisation. Then, in 2016 – two months before his death – I was at his *Piano and A Microphone* concert in Auckland. In between these two main events I began writing a book – simply called *Prince* – for a series on icons of popular music. My central objective in this project was to foreground and examine Prince’s animal advocacy and broader political influences as these factors had received little attention in Princeology. One chapter into this book I realized that my time was better spent actually advocating for animals in my own new research and writing, rather than reflecting on how someone else did this through his music. I’m sure Prince would have appreciated this decision. Sadly, it is posthumously that we are learning more about the far reach of this artist’s commitment to respecting otherness and promoting anti-speciesism in his music and life.

Annie Potts – Head of Cultural Studies and Co-Director of the New Zealand Centre for Human-Animal Studies, University of Canterbury, author of *The Science/Fiction of Sex* (Routledge 2002) & *Chicken* (Reaktion 2012), co-author of *A New Zealand Book of Beasts* (AUP 2013), and editor of *Meat Culture* (Brill 2016).

'My Name Is Prince and I Am Funky':⁵ Crossing Musical Genres

*'The music we make is an alternative, and if someone wants to
go along for that ride – then, cool'*
– Prince, early 1980s.⁶

In a musical career spanning thirty-eight years, Prince sold more than 100 million releases worldwide. He won seven Grammy awards, two ASCAP Film and Television Music Awards,⁷ one Golden Globe Award, five American Music Awards, three Brit Awards, three MTV Video Music Awards, three NAACP Image Awards,⁸ and one Academy Award. In 1984 he won the World Soundtrack Special Award for *Purple Rain* and, just a few years later in 1987, several Razzie Awards for his unsuccessful movie *Under the Cherry Moon*. He has been inducted into both the Grammy Hall of Fame and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and has won the Black Entertainment Television Lifetime Achievement Award and the Soul Train Heritage Award for Lifetime Achievement. The diversity of these various honours and awards demonstrates how varied and influential his impact has been on popular music and culture.

When Prince released his first two albums *For You* (1978) and *Prince* (1979), he also launched the sound, rhetoric, image and attitude that would come to signify him as uniquely different from other artists.⁹ While still a teenager (and then through his early twenties), he pioneered a

⁵ This is the title of the first track on the *Love Symbol* album (Prince and the New Power Generation 1992).

⁶ From an interview with Michael Stone in *Rock and Soul*.

⁷ ASCAP is the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers.

⁸ NAACP is the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

⁹ *For You*, which reached number one on Billboard's R&B chart in 1978, was produced, arranged, composed, and (all 27 instruments) performed by Prince when he was 19 years old, making him the youngest music producer on Warner's label.

hybridized musical style, comprising elements of funk, soul, R&B, rock, pop, synthpop and new wave, now known as the Minneapolis Sound.¹⁰ It wasn't until the 1980s, however, with the advent of MTV, that Prince would become, along with Michael Jackson, one of the first African-American musical artists to be catapulted into full-scale pop stardom across the planet. Prince was a pioneer in his crossing of the black music/white music divide in the United States (particularly through his fusion of funk and rock), drawing a multi-ethnic following; at the same time he was resolute in identifying as an African-American singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, performer and producer.

While Prince's musical style embraced multiple genres, it is arguably its affiliation with funk that generated its greatest emancipatory qualities. In *The Holy Profane*, Teresa Reed describes funk as a style connected with the subversion by African-American musicians of mainstream Americanized Christianity in favour of more self-determined modes of spirituality that overtly address concerns about racial identity and equality. Funk can involve group singing, a novel (often percussive) bass line and a prominent horn section, as well as lyrics 'that direct its participants to party with reckless abandon' (Reed 137).¹¹ Its musical style reflects its philosophy, which is deeply rooted in African cosmology, and expounds that people are created in harmony with the rhythms of nature, and that 'free expression is tantamount to spiritual and mental health' (Ricky Vincent, in Reed 137). Thus funk's emphasis on oneness and on sexual, physical and mental liberation, contrasts markedly with the Christian dichotomy of good versus evil (and separation of body and soul). Yet Prince's irresistible desire to hybridise and subvert, even to the point of contradiction, led him to bring the two cosmologies intimately together. His music often also contained overt references to Christian ideology, and he also used quasi-Christian imagery on his album covers, as well as adopting the crucifixion pose, a halo effect and

¹⁰ Prince's music was also influenced by neo-psychedelia, jazz and gospel.

¹¹ Prince is said to have transformed funk through his deployment of less bass and emphasis on highly processed drum tracks (Hawkins and Niblock 2013).

superhuman elevation on stage and in his pictorial self-representation. All of which shaped his performances and musical repertoire as even more aberrant and inventive, spiritually as well as musically.

While Prince played with musical genres, he was also one of the first pop stars to support diversity through his band configurations. He formed The Revolution in 1979, a multi-ethnic, multi-gendered interdenominational ensemble, which in the mid-1980s included lesbian partners Wendy Melvoin and Lisa Coleman (famously known as the musical duo 'Wendy and Lisa'). Throughout his life Prince mentored and elevated the musical and performing careers of numerous African-American, Hispanic and white women artists, including Gayle Chapman (keyboardist), Susan Rogers (music engineer), Mayte Garcia (dancer), Sheila E (drummer), Cat Glover (choreographer), Kirsten Scott Thomas (actor), Misty Copeland (ballet dancer), and his final band, the all-women ensemble 3rdeyegirl. He began hiring women as musicians, performers, producers, engineers and collaborators in an era when supporting them in masculinist music genres was not a widespread practice, and he especially encouraged women's participation in male-dominated fields like percussion.

Memorial Solo # 2

Music is often described as a language and for those of us who have taken the time to study the art, it quickly becomes obvious that it is that and so much more.

Many of us struggle to master the art – possibly because we intellectualise it too much. There are so many elements to think about: phrasing, articulation, dynamics, tuning, timing and tone. Every instrument has its own set of hurdles: the breath (in wind instruments and vocals), the strings, finding the correct fingering. A simple scale can take on so many dimensions you can literally spend hours practising and just listening to the shape of each note, its colour and relationship to others.

Then come artists like Prince – artists who, it seems, never have to learn the language. There is a soundtrack playing in their heads and, by some miracle, they can articulate it directly through sound. Prince was once asked how many musical instruments he could play and he instantly answered “a thousand”. Artists like Prince are described as naturals. The language of music is not learned, it is known, internally, a part of their essence. Ultimately, Prince had a talent that most musicians can only dream about – the ability to transport themselves into the music – to be the music. Prince was a thousand instruments with every note he played and every note he sang.

One of my favourite songs by Prince is ‘The Beautiful Ones’. Apparently he played it in his last live performance. Prince’s music employed heavy use of keyboards and synthesisers, as was typical of the music of the 1980’s, but also gave musicians the ability to play around with sound and effects. ‘The Beautiful Ones’ is a plaintive song that hangs off two main chords (F and B-flat) until it reaches what would be typically called a bridge where the music modulates and Prince simultaneously pours out his heart, ‘Do you want him? Or do you want me? ’Cause I want you!’ The raw vulnerability of this part of the song is captivating. Prince lets go of all inhibitions and screams with raw, visceral desire.

This ability to let go and allow himself to be completely vulnerable is what sets Prince apart from other artists. In every aspect of his life he lived in a way that was true to himself and not the expectations of others. He was creative and experimental with music and compassionate and empathetic when it came to animals and animal rights. In his track ‘Animal Kingdom’, Prince creates an almost primordial soundscape. His layering of ocean sounds with the calls of various

animals under wavering strings and a dark sustained piano note is a spell that is only broken when the vocal starts. The vocals and harmonies are distorted creating a chromatic chaos of sound, at times combining vocals and instruments. This treatment perhaps serves to break the bonds between human and non-human entwining them together. The chorus is classic Prince - funky and lyrical. The lyrics themselves speak to all of us who advocate for non-human animals and questions societies continued exploitation of the 'animal kingdom'. The legacy Prince leaves in this song is a reminder that 'We're all members of the animal kingdom'. Prince embraced his pure, undistorted animal nature and recognised, like many true visionaries, that the world did not start and end at his feet. The sky is empty without our dove – Prince. He will be missed in the Animal Kingdom and by all who advocate for animal rights – but he will live on in sound, song and his compassion for all living beings. This is what it sounds like when doves cry.

Nichola Kriek – flautist/musician, Education Officer for animal rights organization Save Animals From Exploitation (SAFE), and designer/producer of the 'Animals & Us' teaching resources for New Zealand high schools.

'I'm Not A Woman, I'm Not A Man; I Am Something That You'll Never Understand':¹²**Transgressing Racial, Gender and Sexual Conventions**

When Prince emerged as a musical tour de force, the genres of glam rock and new wave were popular, exemplified by white male musicians such as Freddy Mercury, David Bowie, and groups such as Kiss, Queen, ABC and the Human League. Some punk-rock musicians, such as Adam Ant, also appropriated a 'dandified' image. Like these others, Prince played with, and performatively decoded, dominant images of masculinity, but with his diminutive slender figure and unique sartorial style, he produced an inimitable on and off stage identity that was attractive to black, white, straight, queer, men, women, and others. He appeared liminal – on the edge of something that could be recognized as gendered but difficult to decipher, and therefore to capture or contain: Prince was a gender and a sexuality unto himself. As early as 1996 Robert Walser points out in an article entitled 'Prince as Queer Poststructuralist' the radical affective impact of this artist:

Prince invites men to imagine different modes of eroticism and relations [and] women to imagine men who could imagine such things. Most important, though, he invites everyone to be interpellated into structures of desire that are not territorialized by rigid patriarchal distinctions. Like Deleuze and Guattari, he is after a sort of body without organs that can escape Oedipal structures. He is much more intelligible than they because he is able to enact recodings of desire through music and image rather than having to critique them through language (85).

Prince employed signs, images, lyrics, fashion and movement conventionally read as feminine in his reimagining and enactment of alternative masculinit(ies) and male sexual pleasures. He was not in drag, but rather experimenting with, and reconstructing (a predominantly heterosexual), masculine sexuality beyond the confines of gender ideals. Moreover, and importantly, he worked within, while radically disrupting, formulaic ideas about black masculine sexuality, in

¹² Lyrics in 'I Would Die For You' (*Purple Rain*, Prince and the Revolution 1984).

particular. When Prince's eroticized performances mimic the stereotypical hypersexualized notion of African-American masculinity (and there are many of them) they ultimately undercut this fantasy by simultaneously embracing the opposite of such machismo – powerful sexually assertive women being pursued by an androgynous sex symbol in high heels, frills, make-up, and (as in his 1991 performance of 'Gett Off') 'ventilated' yellow pants with holes in the seat to expose his buttocks.

This effect/affect can best be summed up by those it had most impact on. African-American journalist Terry Hall writes in *The Guardian* in his tribute to Prince:

Prince's music exposed me to a masculine sensuality that allowed a space for vulnerability, ambiguity and fluidity. All this acted as a counter-narrative to what I saw at home and in rap music. . . . Prince's voice, his music, his entire artistic being existed in a liminal space between the sexual and spiritual, something that I had, and have, heard all too rarely.

Similarly, the *US Guardian's* Steven W. Thrasher describes the emancipatory impact for him of Prince's performative subversion of black masculinity:

He really frightened me as a young man, and yet I couldn't look away . . . Prince really spoke to me, both in the way that he dealt with race in a very explicit way and . . . also, as a queer person who didn't know that I was gay when I was quite young, I found Prince just titillating and really frightening. And again, I couldn't look away, because he had this quality that was profoundly sexual, but created a broader sense of sexuality than I was used to considering. He was trying to expand the notion of what it meant to be a man, and yet, at the same time, he was really deconstructing gender. And he wasn't owning being a man or owning being a woman. . . . I realize seeing Prince was one of the first times I saw someone who refused to live in a binary.

While Prince had a transformative influence on black masculinity his music also impacted profoundly on women listeners and viewers. During the Regan era, when conventional gender norms were being (re)entrenched, early Prince songs such as 'The Ballad of Dorothy Parker', 'If I Was Your Girlfriend' (both from *Sign o' the Times* 1987), and 'Darling Nikki' (*Purple Rain* 1984) spoke brazenly of the power of women. In these highly sexualized and provocative songs,

women are not represented as passive objects of masculine sexual conquest (as is the case in much male rap and rock), but instead as independent self-determining individuals who express their active desires confidently and shamelessly; and, if in his songs, women fall in love with Prince, they have fallen for a genderfucking¹³ lover who respects and feels enriched by their desires and wants to learn from them.¹⁴ In songs like ‘International Lover’, ‘Automatic’ and ‘Delirious’, all from the *1999* album (1982), and ‘The Beautiful Ones’ (*Purple Rain* 1984), Prince shakes off orthodox constructions of masculine sexual control and dominance by – often loudly and passionately – ‘enacting his own loss of control [and] the dissolution of his centred subjectivity in the face of desire’ (Walser 86). Emma Gardner, assistant editor of *Noisey* e-zine, writes:


One of the most important [things that Prince taught me] was that there is no right way to be a man, no right way to be a woman. And, to a queer white girl with a different set of problems and privileges, Prince was and continues to be a beacon of fluidity and rebellion, standing defiant in a studded jacket and a G-string, amid a world hell bent on trying to categorise women’s experiences and silence their voices. No matter how grim or gross the world might be, I can escape into one of Prince’s many, many worlds, and feel equal.

While predominantly remembered for his blurring of racial and gender codes, Prince also transgressed high and low culture, class and propriety. With graphically sexualized songs such as ‘Head’ (*Dirty Mind* 1980), ‘My Private Joy’, ‘Jack U Off’ (both on *Controversy* 1981), ‘Little Red Corvette’ (*1999* 1982), ‘Come’ and ‘Orgasm’ (*Come* 1993), Prince sealed a reputation

¹³ ‘Genderfuck’ is a concept in June Reich’s work, which Cynthia J. Fuchs picks up in her reading of sex and death in Prince’s performances. Reich (113, 125) says of genderfuck: ‘to “get over yourself” is counter-identity politics ... we are defined not by who we are but by what we do ... Genderfuck could be said to be the effect of unstable signifying practices in a libidinal economy of multiple sexualities.’ Fuchs refers to genderfuck as performance that questions the notion of identity aggressively, ‘poking at its limits, reimagining its possibilities’ (146).

¹⁴ David Bowie having represented a similar transgressive image earlier, Prince became the gender-fluid figure of Generation X (1965-1981) (Touré 2012).

early on for his contravention of received moral standards in music. The song ‘Darling Nikki’ (*Purple Rain* 1984) – in which the narrator (Prince) encounters Nikki in a hotel lobby ‘masturbating with a magazine’ – was listed as one of the most offensive songs by *Rolling Stone* and prompted Tipper Gore to establish Parents’ Music Resource Centre in 1985 (an outfit monitoring explicit lyrics in pop music) (Draper).

Humour and playfulness occur across Prince’s music; he enjoyed irony, sometimes interrupting a soul-baring ballad to insert a superficial aside (‘Adore’, *Sign o’ the Times* 1987), or drawing attention to a noticeable incongruity between a person and context (‘Joint to Joint’, *Emancipation* 1996). Prince’s role as the ‘movie hero’ ‘The Kid’ in his Academy Award winning film *Purple Rain* is also ironic, given gendered expectations of Hollywood heroes. As Cynthia Fuchs points out: ‘[The Kid] is brave and troubled, but he’s also, always Prince ... paisley god, beauty queen’ (143). Prince also used his wide vocal range (particularly his falsetto) to appeal to listeners’ and viewers’ sense of (transgressive) playfulness and quirkiness. His re-birth in the 1990s as an unpronounceable symbol  which combines the signs for male and female (later termed ‘The Love Symbol’), played further with his overt identification as both masculine and feminine or something more or different. Prince also flirted with this transgender element by announcing his female alter-ego, Camille, had produced an album in 1986 (later released as part of *Crystal Ball* 1998). Camille is also credited for the sped-up vocals in tracks on *Sign o’ the Times*.

Given how Prince’s musical repertoire disrupted gender and sexual terms by undoing the boundaries that police and enforce normative and ‘non-normative’ identities and desires (often punitively), and also by promoting mutually pleasurable non-violent relationships, it is perhaps not surprising that his music, as will be demonstrated shortly, also questioned anthropocentric boundaries that license the exploitation of nonhuman animals.

Memorial Solo # 3

It would be absurd to imagine Prince as being beyond critique. I still remember cringing many years ago when I first heard the track ‘Bambi’ on Prince’s 1979 self-titled album. In this song Prince appeals to Bambi who prefers female lovers: ‘Bambi, can’t you understand? Bambi, it’s better with a man.’ But even here, while a young Prince rehearses a phallogocentric fantasy where same-sex attracted women are merely waiting for a man to show them what true pleasure is, there is a characteristic sense of ambiguity in Prince’s lyrics. In the same song he concedes: ‘Or maybe I’m just too naive, who’s to say, maybe you’re really having fun.’ I think I really loved Prince’s fascination with ambiguity; a flexibility with interpretation that always threatened to overturn symbolic divisions and straight forward identities (‘Have U ever wanted 2 play with someone so much U’d take any one boy or girl?’ he asks in ‘Anna Stesia’). But under all this ambiguity is a curiosity about others and their worlds, and this curiosity wants to ask questions about what the world would look like outside of one’s own subjectivity (‘If I was your girlfriend, would you remember to tell me all the things you forgot when I was your man?’ Prince asks in ‘If I Was Your Girlfriend’). It was such a joy to know that such a fascinating musical figure that I loved so much was also curious about the lives of animals, curious enough to change his own consumption practices and speak openly about human violence towards animals (‘We’re all members of the animal kingdom, Leave your brothers and sisters in the sea’ he says in ‘Animal Kingdom’). Curiosity allows us to imagine other worlds, including worlds without violence. In my book, *The War Against Animals*, I develop a brief thought experiment on the kind of political alliances that would be necessary to close slaughterhouses for one day – one day without animal killing – something I argue might be a potentially more promising political action than World Vegan Day, or Meatless Mondays. I only recently discovered, to my surprise, that Prince apparently proclaimed: ‘We need an Animal Rights Day when all slaughterhouses shut down.’ I will miss being surprised by Prince.

Dinesh Wadiwel – Director of Masters of Human Rights and Co-Convenor of the Human-Animal Research Network (HARN) at Sydney University, author of *The War Against Animals* (Brill 2015) and co-editor of *Animals in the Anthropocene: Critical Perspectives on Non-Human Futures* (Sydney University Press 2015).

'Temptation':¹⁵ Subverting the Sacred and the Profane

While Prince's frank sexual imagery and graphic song lyrics have been predominantly analysed as 'progressively' fluid and rebellious, his music becomes even more ambiguous when its incorporation of messages and imagery relating to 'God' and the divine are taken into account. From its inception, Prince's repertoire has been imbued with spiritual/religious themes; songs such as 'The Ladder' (*Around the World in a Day* 1985), 'The Cross' (*Sign o' the Times* 1987) and his ode to Jehovah in 'The Rainbow Children' (*Rainbow Children* 2001) testify to the crucial place of 'God' in his music. However it is incorrect to assume that his work has only reflected Christian spiritual themes: Prince's music was also influenced by Buddhist, Islamic, New Age and other spiritual belief systems (see also the above discussion of funk music).

Many times sexual and spiritual themes intersect in his songs – for example, in 'Controversy' (*Controversy* 1981), 'Let's Pretend We're Married' (*1999* 1982), 'The Human Body' (*Emancipation* 1996) and 'Satisfied' (*3121* 2006) where the struggle between divine transcendence and base 'animal lust' is depicted, and even celebrated. 'Temptation' (*Emancipation* 1996) is one of Prince's songs that more clearly demonstrates a complicated relationship between sex/body/animal/the profane and god/spirit/the sacred. The protagonist (Prince) growls his enjoyment of carnal pleasure in the line 'I'm working my body in a hot burst of animal lust' before his performance is curtailed by a god-like presence at the end of the song that admonishes sex without love and tells him he must die (in other words, his pleasure-seeking body will be taken from him). This kind of song stages the Christian division and hierarchical privileging of the spiritual or transcendent over the bodily or animal, thereby requiring the mastery and repudiation of both nonhuman animals and those parts of the human thought to be too close to the animal. But while that makes sense in Christian terms, it is completely nonsensical for a musical tradition like funk that empowers the spontaneous movement of the body and the freer expression of its desires and pleasures. Moreover, those places in Prince's

¹⁵ From the album *Emancipation* (Prince and the New Power Generation 1996).

songs connecting human sexuality with ‘animality’ appear lyrically, vocally and instrumentally much more expansive, fun and definitely more desirable than those moments when ‘a higher power’ admonishes or curbs pleasurable physical experiences.

Other male African-American artists, such as Al Green and Marvin Gaye, have also wrestled with – and sometimes agonized over – the dissonance between the ‘sacred’ and the ‘profane’ in their lives (Touré 2012). Musicologists Stan Hawkins and Sarah Niblock convincingly identify how the apparently deep theological messages conveyed in several songs by Prince (‘Anna Stesia’ [*Lovesexy* 1988] and ‘The Holy River’ [*Emancipation* 1996], for example) are actually undercut by his blatant erotic delivery. They suggest that this propensity ultimately renders Prince’s affiliation to faith ‘ambiguous and verging on self-parody’ (Hawkins and Niblock 56).^{16 17}

Prince’s music has always suggested a tension (sometimes celebrated) between the demands of his faith and what he experienced physically and emotionally as a sexual (and animal) being living in the world.¹⁸ In his later career Prince’s attitude towards sexuality became more complex and contradictory: fans were perplexed (and some disappointed) as he seemed to move from a liberationist to conservative approach to sexuality and carnal pleasure. Raised within the Seventh Day Adventist church, Prince converted in the early 2000s, following a series of profound personal losses and changes – including the death of his only son – to the Jehovah’s Witness

¹⁶ Conversely, Prince also used religious sounds and messages in his most eroticized songs: at the end of the controversial ‘Darling Nikki’, mentioned earlier, can be found a spiritual counter message challenging the explicit carnality of Nikki and her lover. An eerie indecipherable vocal ending to this song, which is the sound of Prince singing when played backwards, turns out, when played forwards, to contain the following message: ‘Hello, how are you? Fine, fine, ’cause I know the Lord is coming soon. Coming, coming soon’ (see Steuver, ‘Washington Post Staff Favourite Prince Songs and Why We Love Them’).

¹⁷ Even after Prince was baptised into the Jehovah Witness faith he continued to create erotic songs like ‘Black Sweat’ (*3121* 2006) and ‘When She Comes’ (*Hit’n’Run Phase Two* 2015).

¹⁸ Sometimes Prince’s beliefs prompted unusual actions (albeit ones that generated publicity), such as his withdrawal of the notorious 1987 *Black Album* after he supposedly experienced a revelation that the record was evil; it was rapidly followed by the lighter *Lovesexy* (1988) which Prince described as a spiritual antidote to the *Black Album*.

faith. When interviewed by *USA Today* in 2008, Prince disclosed that his devotion to Jehovah was associated with a change in his personal approach to relationships and sexual matters: he declared ‘I’m single, celibate and sexy, I feel free.’¹⁹ The public response was somewhat unpredictable: as Hawkins and Niblock explain, ‘instead of prompting concerns that the 50-year old star was losing his legendary sex appeal, it heralded fervent support that he was now, actually, even sexier than ever’ (55). This may be explained partly via the continuation of his genre-crossing style (both musically and performatively) and its ability to manipulate and subvert the status quo, even when he was seemingly endorsing normative institutions such as Christianity, marriage and heterosexuality.²⁰ Having crafted his earlier career creating a voice in which all his utterances carried erotic force – even (or especially) his most Christian ones – the more pious Prince wanted to appear, the more raunchy his music came across.

¹⁹ Gundersen, ‘Prince Shows Off a Different Side for “21 Nights”’.

²⁰ Prince’s commitment to the Jehovah’s Witness faith from 2001 onwards precluded him from voting or publically announcing political or charitable affiliations. His faith no doubt also challenged and curbed his earlier sexual expressiveness; at concerts he chose to no longer sing explicit lyrics associated with his more popular songs. In 2008 Prince also provided vague answers (and Biblical references) when questioned about his views on causal sexual relations and marriage equality. At the time this prompted frustration and anger, particularly in LGBTQI communities. Following Prince’s death, Neil Broverman, CEO of LGBT news resource *The Advocate*, stated he chose to celebrate the musician’s life because whether or not Prince’s attitude had changed towards sexuality issues, ‘he didn’t use his platform to undermine the cause ... Prince may not have been loudly advocating for LGBT rights, but he was by no means working against us...It’s playing to our darker impulses to search for things to hate someone for, especially someone as complicated as Prince, a flamboyant black musical genius operating in a racist, sexist culture.’

'We're All Members of the Animal Kingdom':²¹

Challenging Speciesism and the Human/Animal Divide

'I'm not a human, I am a dove. I'm your conscience, I am love.'

Lyrics to 'I Would Die For You'

(Purple Rain, Prince and the Revolution 1984).

While his music is more popularly known for its explicit sexual and spiritual themes, Prince's inventory included many songs that deliberately commented on American and/or global politics, social justice issues, human-animal relations and environmental concerns. He created music that dealt with matters as diverse as America's history of slavery ('Avalanche', *One Night Alone* 2002), the Cold War and nuclear weapons ('Ronnie, Talk to Russia', *Controversy* 1981), HIV/AIDS, poverty and famine ('Sign o' the Times', *Sign o' the Times* 1987; 'Dear Mr Man', *Musicology* 2004), drugs and addiction ('Fascination', *Crystal Ball* 1997), the medicalization of everyday life and increasing power of Big Pharma ('New World', *Emancipation* 1996; 'My Little Pill', *The Vault: Old Friends for Sale* 2007), the futility and violence of war ('Resolution', *Planet Earth* 2007), American nationalism ('America', *Around the World in a Day* 1985), surveillance ('Call My Name', *Musicology* 2004), 9/11 and prejudice ('Cinnamon Girl', *Musicology* 2004), child poverty ('Marz', *Plectrumelectrum* 2014), environmental degradation ('Planet Earth', *Planet Earth* 2007; 'Compassion', *20Ten* 2010), speciesism and the suffering of animals for human purposes ('Animal Kingdom', *Crystal Ball* 1997). Such social, political and ethical concerns are expressed throughout the nearly four decades of Prince's discography. One of his last songs was 'Baltimore', which appears on his final album *Hit'n'Run Phase Two*,

²¹ From 'Animal Kingdom' (*Crystal Ball* 1997).

released in 2015. Prince wrote this as a protest against police brutality towards African Americans in the wake of Freddie Gray's death in police custody in Baltimore, and Michael Brown's death in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014. The lyrics 'Peace is more than the absence of war,' and 'If there ain't no justice then there ain't no peace' reflect the artist's rejection of racism and violence, and elsewhere in the song Prince opposes America's gun culture.

Memorial Solo # 4

‘We’re going down, down, down, if that’s the only way
 To make this cruel, cruel world hear what we have to say
 Put the right words together and make a better day’
 ‘Alphabet Street’ (*Lovesexy*, Prince 1988).

To me, Prince’s musical persona is foremost about narratives of hope. Joy, sex and happiness, yes. Sorrow, certainly – especially now, when every song makes me recall the loss. But most of all, hopes of ‘making better days’ as in the song cited above. Through narratives of escapes from dreadful places, his music and lyrics bring me to utopias where we all can engage with/in the world, through love and dance. Prince himself proves this possible; while performing hetero-desires, he is simultaneously playing around with masculinity, with gender. For women and men of different ages, races and sexualities, his explicit sexual references create spaces of creative play and transgressions of the ‘normal’ and appropriate. Notably, his narratives of hope also include more-than-human lives: animals do not have rights but will if we could overcome our stupid wars and destructive acts. Armies can be fought with love, so can injustices. This is a utopian dream, and it does not hold philosophically – love and hatred are arguably closely interlinked. But hey, let me hold on to this hope, which is foremost about humanity, responsibility and the power of affect. People can do good, they can put words and acts together, and in the end, world differently for creatures of different kinds. Prince helps us in imagining these worlds of multi-species conviviality.

Tora Holmberg – Professor of Sociology, Uppsala University, Sweden, author of *Urban Animals: Crowding in Zoocities* (Routledge 2015) and editor of *Investigating Human/Animal Relations in Science, Culture and Work* (Uppsala Universitet, Centrum för genusvetenskap 2009).

As well as focusing his music on human rights and social issues, Prince expressed concern regarding the exploitation and suffering of other species. He donated his song 'Animal Kingdom' (from *Crystal Ball* 1997) to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) for use as a musical invitation to their 20th anniversary party in New York. This song features animal sounds (see Nichola Kriek's memorial solo # 2 for a closer musical analysis), its antispeciesist lyrics condemning the consumption of red and white meats, dairy, and shellfish. It begins with a reference to the American dairy industry's advertising campaign of the time (Milk: It Will Do a Body Good). Prince, singing in the first person, comments on having seen a friend appearing in an ad for this campaign, and (referencing the spiritual) explains why God didn't intend humans to drink cows' milk. He goes on to reject the consumption of cheese, as well as red and white meats.

Who told us we should eat the swine?

U can bet your final money it damn sure wasn't no friend of mine

What about the clams on the shore?

Souls in progress, here come the fisherman - souls no more

No member of the animal kingdom nurses past maturity

No member of the animal kingdom ever did a thing 2 me

So I don't eat no red meat or white fish

Or funky, funky blue cheese

We're all members of the animal kingdom

Leave your brothers and sisters in the sea

('Animal Kingdom', *Crystal Ball*, Prince Rogers Nelson 1997).

Importantly, in 'Animal Kingdom' Prince does not just critique the killing of animals, he also laments the manipulation of their nurturing relationships, such as the natural rhythm of the mother-calf bond which is brutally severed by dairy production.

The year prior to the release of the *Crystal Ball* album Prince had been voted Sexiest Vegetarian Alive in the annual poll conducted by PETA, and until his death he remained an active member of and donor to this organization, attending galas and benefits for animal rights causes. Prince was vegan at times throughout his life, consistently advocating for a plant-based diet and always outspoken against red meat consumption and animal cruelty.²² He once famously suggested ‘We need an Animal Rights Day when all slaughterhouses shut down’; and, when asked why he cared so much about animals in the face of widespread human suffering, responded in an interview with *Ebony magazine*, ‘Compassion is an action word with no boundaries.’²³

The first of Prince’s albums to be released via his NPG Music Club website was a funk-filled compilation with the bold title of *The Slaughterhouse*. The lyrics to its first track ‘Silicon’ could be read numerous ways (for example, as a critique of anthropocentric self-focused digital culture, gangsta/rap lifestyle, consumerism, and/or meat culture). Thematically there are references to human ignorance of – and separation from – what is important or valuable in life; however the strongest repeated theme involves a critique of meat consumption.

Welcome to the slaughterhouse ...

On a magical rope of silicon

U can bet that they’ll be chillin’ in Babylon

Thinking about a way that they can split the proton

While U eating all the bloody chicken and dead prawn

Mickey D. shake and a filet mignon

Swearing up and down U the picture of health, now come on!

²² Following his death there was great public interest in Prince’s diet, especially whether or not he had remained vegan. His last chef confirmed he was vegetarian (<http://www.fox9.com/news/133133999-story>), while previous chefs in Prince’s employment commented they had sometimes served him fish (<http://www.bravotv.com/blogs/prince-personal-chefs-ray-juell-roberts-reveal-his-favorite-food-diet>).

²³ Gin Andrews, ‘Remembering a Legend: Prince, a Friend to Animals’.

...U're just a rope of silicon (U)

2 the slaughterhouse

Leave that blood alone ...

(‘Silicon’, *Trax from The NPG Music Club, Volume 2: The Slaughterhouse*, Prince and the New Power Generation 2004).

This excerpt from ‘Silicon’ clearly critiques the assumption that eating red or white meat is healthy for humans (the song’s next verse mentions risks to the body’s immune system of consuming meat). The use of terms like ‘bloody’, ‘dead’ and ‘slaughterhouse’ evoke the violence of killing animals for meat production. Prince also stresses the word ‘silicon’ when he sings it, so that it sounds something more like ‘silly con’.

Environmental issues are also represented in Prince’s discography. For his *20Ten* album, he composed a song called ‘Compassion’ which entreats the listener to rage against human greed and self-interest, in order to save the planet and its inhabitants:

When ego, fear, and judgement

b come the rule of law

watch the polar ice caps

heat up, melt down, and thaw

(‘Compassion’, *20Ten*, Prince Rogers Nelson 2010)

Similarly in the lyrics to *Planet Earth* from the 2007 album of the same name, Prince writes:

Imagine holding Planet Earth in the palm of your hand

With no regard for your place of birth or claim to any land

The only thing between us now is the truth we understand

If Planet Earth was in the palm of your hand

50 years from now what will they say about us here?
 Did we care for the water and the fragile atmosphere?
 There are only two kinds of folk and the difference they make
 The ones that give and the ones that take.

In 1999 Prince released a CD and DVD, *Rave Un2 the Joy Fantastic* (for which he won a Genesis Award for his lyrics honouring animals).²⁴ The CD featured on its inside cover an explanation from Prince why the jacket he wears for the album image is made of fake wool; he then goes on to educate about the actual fate of lambs and sheep in the wool industry:

If this jacket were real wool, it would have taken 7 lambs whose lives would have begun like this ... Within weeks of their birth, their ears would have been hole-punched, their tails chopped off and the males would have been castrated while fully conscious ... 20 240% of lambs die b4 the age of 8 weeks: 8 million mature sheep die every year from diseases, xposure or neglect
 (Prince, *Rave Un2 The Joy Fantastic* 1999).

The paragraph also describes what happens as a result of shearing sheep too early, specifically how many will die prematurely as they are unable to maintain their body temperatures in bad weather. Fans of Prince were always interested in his nonconforming image and vivid sartorial choices, making his compassionate fashion sense another direct form of activism by the artist. When a concert-goer at one of his performances in Washington DC attempted to give him a leather coat, Prince responded ‘Please do not kill a cow so that I can wear a coat.’²⁵

²⁴ Genesis Awards are given out annually by the Humane Society of the United States to individuals in news or entertainment media who raise public awareness of animal issues.

²⁵ Gin Andrews, ‘Remembering a Legend: Prince, a Friend to Animals’.

Memorial Solo # 5

I grew up with Prince. I have fond memories of dancing along with my aunts to his music videos; of singing his ballads into my hairbrush microphone; of admiring his penchant for frilled shirts and purple attire. But despite his music being a mainstay on my playlists (even as they moved from mixed tape, to CD, to smart phone), I never really gave much thought to their creator. It wasn't until I started down my current academic path that I began to realise just how transgressive, subversive, significant, and inspirational Prince and his music really were.

When I began my studies, I was instantly inspired by texts which interrogated binaries and boundaries: where notions of gender and sexuality weren't fixed but fluid, where lines between so-called 'high' and 'low' culture were blurred, and where the parameters of 'the human' and 'the animal' were called into question. The more I engaged with these subversive texts, the more I realised how unique Prince was; he seemed to embody many of the transgressions I'd been drawn to. I cast an academic eye (and ear) over his music videos and song lyrics, and developed a new-found appreciation for his unabashed androgyny and sex-positivity, and an admiration for the confidence with which he disregarded the 'rules' of gender, race, taste, and sexuality. When I eventually found my 'home' in critical animal studies it came as no surprise to me to learn of Prince's veganism and to find that animal advocacy too, was present in his music.

I, like so many others, was shocked and saddened to hear of his death; as fate would have it, I was visiting the same aunts that had introduced me to his music all those years ago. We wore purple and put his music on repeat, and revelled in his rule-breaking. I thought, in true Prince style, he'd crossed a boundary within my own life too; the popular background music to my childhood had become the subversive soundtrack to my research.

Kirsty Dunn – creative writer, photographer, author of 'Devour the World, Inherit the Earth: Representations of Western Meat Production and Consumption in Contemporary Fiction' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Canterbury 2015), doctoral student in Human-Animal Studies.

As with his subversion and reinvention of black masculinity, Prince's commitment to antispeciesism has been a source of strength for black animal rights activists in particular. In the wake of his death, the question of whether or not Prince was actually vegan generated some debate within the animal rights community. Four days after his death, vegan performer and digital media producer, Aph Ko, from Black Vegans Rock, challenged such fundamentalism within the animal rights movement for its distraction from the broader influence of Prince's advocacy for animals. She wrote:

This fear of 'being attacked', particularly by (white) vegan animal rights activists, for celebrating the life of someone who might not be vegan is something that occurs far too often in this movement, so much so that the conversation surrounding whether or not Prince is vegan has clouded out his legacy, his activism, and his iconic creativity.

In her own tribute, Aph Ko acknowledged Prince's impact at the intersection of black, gender and animal rights politics:

I would personally like to celebrate Prince, his music, his life, and his animal rights advocacy. He also broke racialized gender boundaries which should be celebrated as well... He has influenced many black people to go vegan and that must be remembered.²⁶

As a number of the tributes included in this essay have expressed, veg*ns who fall in love with Prince's music without knowing about his animal politics always seem to feel, when they eventually come across a reference to the Purple One's own anti-speciesism, that it fits perfectly with the radical generosity of his other boundary-crossings: musical, spiritual, racial, gendered and sexual. In this way, Prince's rejection of meat alongside his exuberant dismantling of normative black (and white) masculinities uncouples carnism from any fixed version of desirable male gender or sexuality. Making sexiness synonymous

²⁶ Aph Ko, 'RIP Prince'.

with nonconformity, nonviolence, refusal of exploitation, and above all with exquisitely sensitive bodily expression and pleasure, means that respect and compassion for other bodies will be a necessary part of the package.

Even when not directly in the service of political messages, animals feature in many of Prince's songs and videos (including horses, spiders, snakes, elephants, mules, fish, to name just a few species). A recurring avian figure in Prince's music is the dove, symbolic of love and peace in Western culture (and also of the Holy Spirit in Christianity). In 'When Doves Cry' (*Purple Rain* 1984) an image is invoked of the birds saddened by the conflict and hurt between the lovers.²⁷ So familiar is Prince's musical association with these birds that doves were released at tributes across the world following his death. However, the planned release of doves to start off New Orleans' parade in honour of his life was respectfully halted following a message by PETA that explained Prince's animal politics and the usual plight of birds freed at such events.

Another animal figure in Prince's repertoire is the dolphin. Ambiguously represented in Western symbolism, dolphins are at once terrestrial and extraterrestrial (often characterized as able to mediate between worlds); associated with both peace (via the New Age movement) and war (via the military-industrial complex) (Armstrong 2013, Bryld and Lykke 2000); and indistinctly 'gendered' (as Prince appears himself). The song 'Dolphin' features on Prince's *Gold Experience* album:

How beautiful do the words have to be
 Before they conquer every heart?
 How will you know if I'm even in the right key
 If you make me stop before I start?

If I came back as a dolphin would you listen to me then?
 Would you let me be your friend? Would you let me in?

²⁷ This contrasts with the other animal imagery in this song – ie, 'animals strike curious poses' when sexual tension is present.

You can cut off all my fins but to your ways I will not bend
 I'll die before I let you tell me how to swim.
 ('Dolphin', *The Gold Experience*, Prince Rogers Nelson 1995)

In this song the dolphin is a sustained metaphor that allows the lyrics to be interpreted in different ways – they might refer to a lover talking to someone who has hurt her or him; or God talking to a human soul; or the artist himself (Prince) speaking to world that doesn't want to hear his message. 'Dolphin' may also be read as a song about reincarnation. But the animal doesn't remain just a metaphor because there is also a message regarding how we actually treat marine animals: mutilating their bodies in fishing, and training them, if cetaceans, to perform in certain ways for human entertainment.

Memorial Solo # 6

The thing that first drew me to Prince is that his music extends the soul and funk vision of sex as non-coercive, non-judgemental, all directly counter to the tenets of rape culture. But it didn't take long to notice that Prince's message is all about being loving – even when her aim is just to 'love 'em and leave 'em fast' – accepting, open to exploration. No one sets out to use anyone, no one gets abused, and, barring heartbreaks, everyone has a good time. Intriguing enough as a warm current against the cold tide of haterism in popular culture, his vision may be most powerful where it is least obvious. It's hard not to see how viewing others as partners, collaborators, and equals modeled an artistic practice through which he was consistently promoting female singers, musicians, and songwriters. What needs some teasing out is how it also informs an artist animal politics.

To me, labels are all about consumerism, so the question of Prince's veganism was never personally interesting. Instead, I'm drawn to his engagements with animals through his music. As a literary scholar, I've long tracked how animals get to have stories, if not have histories in

the broadest sense, and concluded that it is only ever following the breakdown of metaphorical usage. Like the jockeys and horses in ‘Little Red Corvette’ on *1999* (1982), dogs and pussies are dead metaphors intentionally pushed to awkward, absurd breakdowns in ‘La La La, He, He, Hee’ on *Sign o’ the Times* (1987). In the ruins of metaphor, the possibility of animal agency starts to take shape, for the dog-bark sound sampled in the latter song’s beat tells another story of animals and aesthetic agency.

Because you can’t throw a rock at a pile of novels without hitting one with dogs in it, my research has led me to collect some arcane bits of the representational history of dogs that all point to an artist animal genius at work here. Transcending the one-off novelty of The Singing Dogs – Carl Weismann’s 1950s *musique concrete*-like experiment in pitches of dog barks that he recorded and sampled into songs, and that was given a second life with the 1983 re-release of ‘Jingle Bells’ – Prince’s song constitutes a response that maps a positive alternative. Ordinarily the repeated sound of barking dogs drives people mad, so number one on a 2007 survey of most hated Christmas songs was, you guessed it, ‘Jingle Bells’ by The Singing Dogs.

In ‘La La La, He He Hee’, the difference lies in a basic acceptance of the percussive intention of barks that allows Prince to pursue an innovative potential for animal agency in music. Rather than providing the melody, a mainstay sound across canine and human cultures rises from the ruins of the artist’s lyrical representation of himself as a metaphorical dog to make music. The barking sound drives the rhythm, moves the song, gets your butt twitching. As if that isn’t loveable enough, no dogs were hurt in the production, for Prince produced the canine sounds by manipulating human vocal recordings. Pure purple genius, loving, accepting, and open to exploration of the art that is living in more-than-human worlds – that’s where I see his work as most influential.

Susan McHugh – Professor of English at the University of New England, Maine, author of *Animal Stories: Narrating across Species Lines* (University of Minnesota Press 2011) and *Dog* (Reaktion 2004), and co-editor of *The Routledge Handbook of Human-Animal Studies* (Routledge 2014).

Prince's lyrics, then, as well as his musical engagement with the body itself, are intensely and perpetually intersectional: his appeals to the human-animal body and his use of nonhuman-animal imagery both effect a constantly-shifting destabilization of established divisions between human/animal, mind/body, masculine/feminine, and sacred/profane. His music celebrated nonhuman nature (in the form of animals and the environment) and human nature (in the form of music, dance, physicality, spirituality and love): whether he was singing about sex, God, or animals, he was challenging the Western devaluation of the physical and of 'Nature' in us. Prince was also combatting the denigration of black bodies, women's desires, 'the feminine', and the other-than-human world, valuing these and turning them into something powerful and esteemed. He subverted the received notion of 'animal lust', not by dismissing or rejecting this (as if humans weren't animals and didn't feel passion in this way) or by trying to 'transcend' such passions: instead he championed the physical, sensual and carnal in his music, imagery and performances, at the same time transforming the conventional understanding of gender and sexuality by endorsing and celebrating nonviolent, compassionate explorations.

Ultimately, Prince's music and performances evade territorialization in the Deleuzian sense; they can't be easily categorized. By experiencing the interweaving of contradictory themes and images – such as the masculine and feminine or the carnal and the divine or the human and animal – the listener and audience member may enter into a novel world, sometimes even a utopian one, in which something else emerges from within the dynamic space between binaries: a new sensation, perception, movement, response, feeling. This is the affective emancipatory potential of Prince's music – its capability to produce moments of transformative desire that transgress binaries and disrupt language and meaning. And that emancipatory energy, it turns out, doesn't stop short of embracing both our animal selves *and* our animal others.

Memorial Solo # 7

I grew up listening to Prince's music and as a teenager I was mesmerised by his visual style and the artistry of his music video clips. MTV was a new phenomenon in the 80s. Yet, as I watch Prince video clips on You-Tube today, I am still mesmerised and transported into the colourful, encapsulated universes that are his songs, each a story, fulfilling and meticulously complete. In the wake of his sudden death, I have come to realise that Prince left us with much to think about. Yes, he was unique and transgressive, and this has shown me how to be fearless. Yes, he was creative and flamboyant, and this taught me to recognise freedom. Yet, it is a lesson I have learned, perhaps the one I subconsciously connected with and I did not even realise was being offered that resonates the most in the wake of his passing. He was a kind human being who wanted us to be kind. He is credited with saying, 'A strong spirit transcends rules', which I believe is a useful quote to apply to any form of activism that aims to promote acceptance, kindness and equality in a society or system whose dominant values seem to oppose this kind of progress taking place. Prince probably didn't see himself fitting comfortably under the labels 'man' or 'legend' or 'genius' but I think he would be pleased to be remembered alongside our animal cousins, as an earthling.

Donelle Gadenne, jazz singer, PhD student in Critical Animal Studies, veterinary professional, author of 'A Canine-Centric Critique of Selected Dog Narratives' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Canterbury 2015), and co-author of *Animals in Emergencies: Learning from the Christchurch Earthquakes* (CUP 2014).

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