



POEMS BY CRITTERS



Poetic excerpts from a dialogue
between a machine & a human



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (noun)

/ˌɑːtɪfɪʃl ɪn'telɪdʒəns/

[uncountable]

(abbreviation AI)

(computing)

the study and development of computer systems that can copy intelligent human behaviour.

Language is crucial to the development of artificial intelligence.

POEM (noun)

/'pəʊəm/

a piece of writing in which the words are chosen for their sound and the images they suggest, not just for their obvious meanings. The words are arranged in separate lines, usually with a repeated rhythm, and often the lines rhyme at the end.

Her collected poems were published after the war.

CRITTER (noun)

/'krɪtər/

(North American English, informal)

a living creature

wild critters

Along with other dictionaries, the Oxford Dictionary defines the word critter as „a living creature“.

The word apparently found its way into American and Canadian English during the 19th century, as a colloquial dialectal variant on the word „creature“, coming into English via Old French. Until today, it has mostly been used as an informal term for either wild or domestic animals. Critters might be the unspecified small animals you remember sharing your picnic with. A farmer might talk about their critter panicking during a thunderstorm. Less commonly, the word is referred to in the context of people: It can mean a child when used as a term of sympathetic endearment, or it can mean an unfortunate person.¹

American multi-professional scholar and author Donna Haraway is renowned for bringing together different fields, such as technology, science, feminism and biology. She is also exploring how we might overcome the Anthropocene and deal with questions of Earthly survival. In her book „Staying with the Trouble“, Haraway introduces the word critter on the very first page. It almost seems to be a framework to be set before starting with the rest of the text. Her choice of using the term is explained in the annotations:

„Critters is an American everyday idiom for varmints of all sorts. Scientists talk of their “critters” all the time;

and so do ordinary people all over the U.S., but perhaps especially in the South. The taint of “creatures” and “creation” does not stick to “critters”; if you see such a semiotic barnacle, scrape it off. In this book, “critters” refers promiscuously to microbes, plants, animals, humans and nonhumans, and sometimes even to machines.“² Haraway suggests that the term creature – from latin „creatura“ – is associated with the belief that the world was brought into being by a god. But, as Jeffrey J. Williams sums it up: „Haraway’s key idea is that animals are “companion species.” (...) It rebuts the traditional Western view that man rightly has “dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle” (Genesis I:26). Haraway sees it the other way around: We are not kings in a great chain of being, but, in her parlance, we are all critters.“³

„Kings in a great food chain“ is definitely a widely shared self-image among humans. One manifestation of this narrative is the naming of things: by consciously using separate words for „animals“ and „humans“ (and even „plants“), we are proposing the idea of a given disconnection within the Earth’s living population. This wording supports hierarchical speciesism at its best, leading to a twisted excuse for massive cruelty from humans towards animals, including exploitation, abuse, and mass-murder.

A term that covers both humans and non-humans in one single word overcomes their gap in a technical way and simultaneously opens a space for the question: what connects and what really divides humans from other living beings? Change within terminology is as simple as it is provocative – it unsettles the familiar. It also triggers our imagination on a larger scale and lets us speculate on alternative forms of coexistence. Starting within everyday language, we are encouraged to look for exit strategies out of the (self-) destructive Anthropocene, to find other frameworks for all critters sharing the same planet.

¹ American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2016

² *Staying with the Trouble*, p. 169, n1

³ Jeffrey J. Williams, *OCTOBER* 18, 2009,

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/donna-haraways-critters/>

POEMS BY CRITTERS

Foreword & poems on page
9,13,26,29

by Alexandra Ruppert, human

Poems on page 10,14,17,22,25,30
by GPT-2, A.I.



LAKE

Humans talking to humans
standing by the safe edge of a lake
gazing at duck birds
weaving tails

When waterfronts lighten
salty drops fall off their face
blend in the pattern and unfold
in the wet surface

Feathers opening slow
bread crumbs swim by
lake waves talking to lake waves
Hello Hello Hello

CITY

As long as I
can
my eyes glitter in the stinging
carnival air
I smell beauty
I feel an ever-weakening
case of a mind on fire
something
is wrong with me
the person I used to be
Is bad.

A city filled with sparrows
his story a dresser, a crane
and a soft hum and the sound of crooners
what I see makes my head spin





ROADKILL I

A deer with a broken neck
microwave-sized
full moon black eyes,
a blossom in spring
without breath since a bit
maybe one hit
on the radio cracked
a snail passing by
a u-turning ship
deer mothers sing
the volume turns up

THE MINOTAUR KNOWS

The minotaur knows
I am absolutely not in me to fucking hate
other crimson eyes
and more cowards
and champagne
And a wispy eyed servant
wait for Leonardo to survive
and poverty
 prospers cuz they were never disemboweled and
art hot in hot blood
I know that is true but it's simply not true
and when these are more violent than how





CREATURES

the closer they are
the faster they go
the dapples close
happy eyes closed
there's no water
it feels so lonely
when I look
into the clear waters

I can see that the
waters are heavy
and the world stirred
it's as though the
flutes stepped
in the water
and they're laughing



A.I. is helping us
to talk to animals
(yes, really)

12/2019 - wired.com

Is Interspecies Communication Possible? AI, AI, Captain!
07/2021 - analyticsindiamag.com

The Challenges of Animal Translation - A.I. may help us decode animalese. But how much will we really be able to understand?
04/2021 - newyorker.com

We're dangerously close to pet translating devices: convert your dog's bark into English
01/2018 - sciencetrends.com

The Language of Dolphins Could Be Translated by 2021 - Soon, we may understand the language of another species.
01/2017 - futurism.com

Everyday bat vocalizations contain information about emitter, addressee, context, and behavior
12/2016 - nature.com



BIRD

we fly on the wind
if only bird has a river
maybe dry eyes that are called
love.

the wind is in their breath
maybe it is a honey
from the honeycomb
maybe its a crush
but nothing's a kiss
to the lonesome bird.

graduation without a song

A fresh bird

princd by life has picked up the song of a bird





MICROLIGHTCONE

The way other people talk
dark boiler
waiting for steam to set
floating eye
shooting through the air dry
kinda
about a dime really
microlightcone
microrelay sitting
you move
the laser pointer makes a
red light bounce back
and makes a historical record
I call it a scholarship
to help save the rain forest

ROADKILL II

I insert a coin
in a fortuneteller machine
– once you will be a swallow –
my metallic blue back
my chase / your asphalt
I am faster than rain
my high-pitched car crash
I am swimming in air
glass window voice
my red chest
in the hand
of a fortune teller machine





KISSED BY A WASP

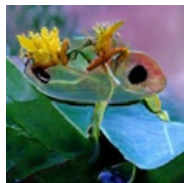
I sit
writing cute lines
in the waiting room
of a doctresse
arm hurts

I am
unable to close my fist
my elbow is
double-sized swollen
from a wasp's
one-night-stung
kiss

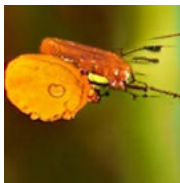
WAVES

As the shoreline retreats
rink-side I
tuck into a shadow
taking the water below
And the waves swallow me
and I don't know what to do
Hurling with the tide
I touch the water

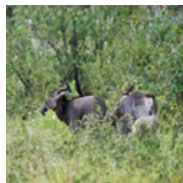




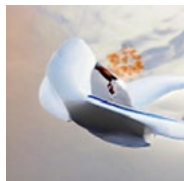
p.8



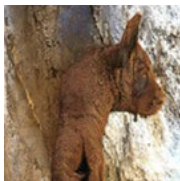
p.28



p.12



p.23



p.21



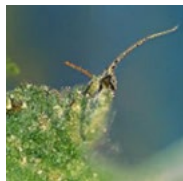
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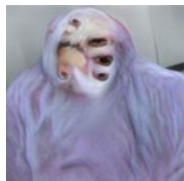
p.18



p.24



p.16



p.15



p.31



p.27

All illustrations by Alexandra Ruppert (human),
inspired by CGI photos on the left page.
CGI photos by BigBiGAN dataset (A.I.) as output,
after fed with various photos of critters as input.

A zine by Alexandra Ruppert, Berlin 2021

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