Lives of the Monster Dogs Short Guide

Lives of the Monster Dogs by Kirsten Bakis

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Contents

Characters

At the heart of Lives of the Monster Dogs is the profound love that links its two narrators and protagonists, Ludwig Von Sacher, the dogs' historian, and Cleo Pirra, a twentyone-year-old university history student.

Cleo's passion for the dogs and admiration for their beauty and elegance is in sharp contrast to Ludwig's grim self-assessment.

In his journal, the German Shepherd-human hybrid expresses loathing for his own kind: the monster dogs "look like ugly parodies of humans.... There is no place for monsters in this world." Ludwig and Cleo's love for one another lifts Cleo from her despair and brings them both to profound vision of kinship with other beings, living and dead.

Ludwig is obsessed with the scientist who first conceived of the monster dogs, Augustus Rank. Ludwig scrutinizes Rank's papers with the kind of attention usually reserved for sacred scripture. His studies are fueled by a masochistic belief that understanding his creator will answer the monster dogs' "urgent question": "What is our purpose?" Though fully aware that Rank is "a man forever incapable of human love and compassion," Ludwig feels the same intense loyalty to him that a typical dog might toward a master, however cruel. His characteristically canine deification of a sadist is poignantly incongruous in a being as urbane and intellectual as Ludwig.

While none of the characters in the novel's present (New York of the early twenty-first century) belongs to any established religion, the novel surrounds the monster dogs' creator, Augustus Rank and his mother, Maria, with references to Christ and the Virgin Mary. Like the small Prussian villages it emulates, the village of Rankstadt had a "little church" that "was always full on Sundays." Nevertheless, the deity presiding over the respective labors of Rankstadt's human scientists and canine creations is the diabolical Rank. What sustains the scientists in their research and the dogs in their cruel servitude is their belief in a "Second Coming." At the right moment, they believe, Rank's spirit will return to lead and to judge them.

The name of Rank's mother, Maria, suggests, of course, the Virgin Mary. Like her namesake, Maria Rank is the subject of works of art that powerfully touch the emotions of her viewers, though little is known of her life. Maria Rank haunts Cleo's dreams, and her spirit ultimately manifests itself (though rather obliquely) to both Cleo and Lydia. While her son, Augustus, is a "rough beast" who incites his followers to slaughter and mayhem, Maria Rank inspires with hope those in contact with her spirit.

Augustus and Maria Rank died long before Cleo or any of the present generation of monster dogs was born. Though the question is never unambiguously resolved, the book hints that Augustus Rank lives on as a ghost or demon rather than merely a myth or memory. Whether Augustus's mother, Maria, exists outside the imagination of Ludwig, Lydia, and Cleo is, similarly, open-ended. Maria exercises a powerful and

benign influence on all three. All the major characters in Lives of the Monster Dogs are defined by their relationship with either Augustus or Maria, or, in Ludwig's case, both.

From 1882 until his suicide in 1916, Augustus Rank presided over the development of the monster dogs. Through excerpts from Rank's journal and from Ludwig's unfinished biography, the reader learns that Augustus's mother, Maria, died when her son was eleven years old and thus played a small role in her son's otherwise well-documented life. Upon Maria's death, Augustus's father sends his lonely, stuttering son to Switzerland, abandoning him to the care of an aunt and uncle who ignore and ridicule him. In his misery and anger, Augustus stabs a baby bird. The killing is a mystical experience for him: "At the instant when his blade entered the bird's flesh, Augustus suddenly had the feeling that he was piercing a thick, muffling membrane which had separated him from the world for so long that he had not been aware of its existence until that moment." Augustus begins to dissect small animals, motivated both by scientific curiosity and by a desire to recreate the same ecstasy he had experienced when stabbing the bird. Through dissection, Augustus has the mystical sense that he is penetrating important secrets that lie hidden beneath the skin. At the University of Basel, Augustus becomes a brilliant scientist. As he grows older, however, he experiences escalating delusions of grandeur and graduates from the torture of animals to murder.

As a student, Augustus conceives of "the great project of his life," a race of dog soldiers. Initially financed by Prince Friedreich (later Wilhelm II), Augustus flees to Canada with his crew of scientists when he is unable to meet the Prince's deadline for completion of the project. Isolated from the rest of the world in Rankstadt, Augustus presides over the work until he believes that his powers are failing. Overdosing on cocaine, Rank leaves a suicide note promis ing to return: "Work ceaselessly, and when the great dog army is at last assembled, look for me, for my spirit shall return to lead you in our first great victory."

While Ludwig attempts to understand Augustus Rank through the documentation he has left behind, two other monster dogs, Mops Hacker and Klaue Lutz, actually are possessed by Augustus's spirit, or, at least, believe themselves to be. In a dream, Mops Hacker swallows a cloud, which changes into Augustus Rank. Rank addresses Mops as "My Son." The experience transforms Mops from a despised mongrel outcast to the leader of the dogs' revolution.

The "dog with the soul of a man," as Mops is called, leads the monster dogs in the destruction of Rankstadt and massacre of its human inhabitants. The dogs, under Mops leadership, are acting as a bloodthirsty mob, not as the noble soldiers that were Augustus's stated ideal. Augustus, however, so clearly enjoys killing for its own sake that it is entirely believable that Mops is acting under his creator's posthumous direction when he murders Rankstadt's children.

After Mops's death, the receptacle for Rank's spirit is Klaue Lutz. As leader of the monster dogs in New York, Klaue behaves with ruthlessness and Germanic efficiency.

When evidence of the dogs' "illness" can no longer be ignored, he stockpiles weapons and organizes a committee of dogs to shoot those who have become mad. Orchestrating the senseless destruction of the Neuhundstein castle, Klaue Lutz believes himself to be Rank. "I don't believe my name is Klaue," he tells Cleo. "No... RankMops-Augustus-Hacker, something like that. Doktor, to you." Like Augustus and Mops before him, Klaue experiences an almost mystical joy in destruction.

The spiritual influence of Rank's mother, Maria, is as benign as that of her son is destructive. Of Maria, Ludwig has been able to learn only, rather inauspiciously, that she was a chronic invalid who died young and that she had an artist lover, who painted several portraits of her. More than a century after her death, Maria makes her presence felt through the arresting beauty of her portraits, enigmatic appearances in Cleo's dreams, and, at the very end, a visitation to Lydia and Cleo.

While Augustus embodies chaos and destruction for Ludwig, Maria represents the ideal of a humanity to which he vainly aspires. Shortly after the dogs arrive in New York City, Ludwig accosts Cleo on the street because of her resemblance to Rank's mother. Later, when Cleo asks Ludwig about the special significance Maria's portraits have for him, he replies that he very much wonders "what it would be like to be human." For Ludwig, Maria represents the human part of himself that he fears will be extinguished by madness. The implied contrast is to Rank, whose spirit goads Mops and Klaue into madness and a frenzy of destruction.

Though she can never see her own physical resemblance to Maria, so striking to Ludwig, Cleo comes to be haunted by her.

Cleo notices that the figure in Ludwig's portraits looks worried, as if she were straining "to see through the haze of years." Cleo imagines that Maria's "spirit, forced to be present in the room because of the portraits, must be aware now of what her son Augustus had done and what the results had been, and I wondered if she was sorry for it, or if she had something to say that might help us." Again and again, Cleo dreams that Maria is trying to communicate with her.

Though Cleo desperately tries to understand, she never receives a message from Maria that can be put into words.

Besides Ludwig, Cleo's closest friend among the monster dogs is Lydia Petze, a white Samoyed. Lydia's instincts on moral issues are always trustworthy, and her very presence has a redemptive effect on anyone in contact with her. Descriptions of Lydia emphasize her shining whiteness, which her canine suitors in Rankstadt believe is an outward mark of her purity. Lydia's merely happening to walk by lifts Mops from the despair that had brought him to the brink of suicide.

The Lydia Cleo comes to know in New York is an elegant musician, who plays her own musical compositions on the piano.

Though she is the only dog not afflicted by the madness that drives them to kill one another, she is a capable fighter when the need arises. Of all the characters, Lydia is

most active in combatting the evil-doing of both Rank's canine avatars. During the revolution, she kills Mops Hacker because he is attacking innocent women and children. In a parallel scene, Lydia rescues Cleo from Klaue, who, possessed by Rank, has come to Cleo's room to kill her.

At the end of the novel, the spirit of Maria has triumphed over the baleful influence of her son, Augustus. Maria's spirit had roused Cleo and Lydia from apathy and despair and shown them a way to escape from the burning castle. More importantly, Maria's appearance seems to have healed Lydia from the madness, which had just begun to manifest itself. Though Ludwig disappeared, Cleo and Lydia, the characters most closely allied with Maria, found peace.

Social Concerns

Lives of the Monster Dogs is a dreamlike fantasy with little overt social commentary. What resonates with the reader is the love between a young woman and a dog with human speech and intelligence. Nonetheless, through the negative example of Augustus Rank, creator of the monster dogs, the novel engages issues currently debated by scientific ethicists and animal rights activists.

The monster dogs were originally the product of military research. Initially, Rank allied himself with the Prussian Prince Wilhelm (later Wilhelm II), who saw in the creation of dog soldiers an army "impossible to defeat, its members fierce, numerous, and disposable (for more could always be made)." Like a great deal of present-day military hardware, the monster dogs, after a long period of development, were obsolete as weapons of war. They do, however, have sufficient destructive power to annihilate the entire village of Rankstadt.

Rank and the scientists who continued his work were obsessively dedicated to penetrating the secrets of creation, regardless of the pain inflicted on their subjects. The monster dogs' memory of their suffering in Rankstadt's "operating theater" has made them resolve to die before allowing themselves to be examined by humans who might be able to help them. Klaue Lutz defends his plan for appointing a committee of dogs to kill those who have gone insane: "Once we are helpless, insane, then what will happen?. . . We will be confined in their laboratories and hospitals, and we will live on there, helpless, alone, humiliated.... Should we refuse to eat, lose the ability to move, even to breathe, they will attach us to their abominable machines and keep us alive, prisoners." Klaue gives a voice to countless experimental animals.

Recent breakthroughs in cloning and genetic engineering have made scientifically possible human-animal hybrids and, hence, animals with human intelligence. Some of the science fiction novels discussed below deal much more directly than Lives of the Monster Dogs with the ethical implications of creating human-animal hybrids to provide eyes, livers, and other body parts for transplant. Medical ethicists must weigh the anthropocentric use of sentient crea tures for spare parts against the medical benefits to suffering human beings. Like many twenty-first century consumers, the Rankstadt scientists believe that the natural world exists to provide raw materials for human endeavors.

Symbolically, the monster dogs represent not only helpless laboratory animals, but human beings who, because of cultural or racial differences, are treated as an underclass. Though Lives of the Monster Dogs makes no mention of Nazism, the Germanspeaking dogs were created to support Prussian militarism. Rank's sadistic surgical experiments unavoidably recall Mengele's medical experiments on concentration camp inmates. The human inhabitants of Rankstadt believe themselves to be a master race, entitled to inflict pain and servitude on beings they deem inferior.

The scientists who created the monster dogs forced on them the surgical and genetic procedures that situated them painfully midway between human and animal.

The book, therefore, might be read as a plea for the ethical treatment of experimental subjects, animal and human. It questions the morality of creating animal-human hybrids. In more general terms, the book condemns the advancement of technology unhampered by any concern for its potential destructiveness.

Techniques

Lives of the Monster Dogs incongruously combines wild improbabilities with unusual precision about dates and documentation. The novel has two narrators, both historians. Ludwig von Sacher is writing a biography of Augustus Rank. He meticulously weighs the evidence found in Rank's sometimes fragmentary records, which (rather improbably) the monster dogs have transported throughout their long trek from northern Canada to New York City. Cleo Pirra, supposed author of Lives of the Monster Dogs, is a twenty-one-year-old history major when she first meets Ludwig. For six years after the catastrophe that destroyed all of the dogs except for Lydia, Cleo works on her book, alternating accounts of her own memories of the dogs with excerpts from Ludwig's journal, his letters to Cleo, Ludwig's biography of Rank, Rank's diary, newspaper articles by Cleo and others, and the complete libretto of Mops Hacker: The Opera. Besides buttressing their conclusions with excerpts from various documents, Ludwig and Cleo are very precise about dates: e.g. "The first monster dog was completed on September 15, 1968, at dusk."

That the fantastic story of the monster dogs is framed by the accounts of two historians committed to reporting accurately the most minute details does not really make it more credible. Not all readers will be able to suspend disbelief. Cleo Pirra says early in the book that "the dogs seemed to live in a world not ruled by the laws of probability."

There is a dreamlike, almost playful quality in the sheer number of anachronisms, improbable coincidences, and improbabilities.

Though the dog soldiers have, ostensibly, been created through a combination of selective breeding, prosthetic enhancements, and Moreau-like plastic surgery, science and technological probability is almost gleefully fudged. Advancing scientific knowledge is a communal activity. That the Rankstadt scientists, lacking knowledge of genetic engineering, should succeed in creating human/animal chimeras strains credulity to the breaking point.

Among the many improbabilities is the monster dogs' comfort with twenty-firstcentury culture and technology. Though he came from a town in which domestic life had not advanced beyond its nineteenthcentury Prussian origins, Ludwig writes his biography of Rank on a computer and can drive his own limousine. Anachronistically, some of the documents he consults for Rank's biography are on microfilm. These violations of natural probability are acceptable only in a dream or myth.

Perhaps the story's greatest improbability is the notion that dogs engineered to walk upright would make good soldiers at all.

When Lydia runs or fights, she goes on all fours. Only when she wishes to preserve her image as an elegant lady does she stand, balancing herself on a parasol. Clearly, Rank's conception of a race of dog soldiers makes mythic rather than practical sense.

The monster dogs are emblematic of the human condition. Like them, we aspire toward humanity in its most exalted sense, but cannot control eruptions of the beast within.

Though its subject and near future setting might appear science fictional, Lives of the Monster Dogs is really a Gothic fantasy.

Augustus Rank is the kind of dynamic, fanatic, larger-than-life villain whose energies drive the Gothic plot. Bakis's book depends heavily on the Gothic conventions of living portraits and prophetic dreams.

The spirit of Maria Rank lives on in her portraits and in Cleo's dreams.

Themes

Lives of the Monster Dogs intertwines three rather melancholy thematic concerns. First, the book suggests that loss and the pain of anticipating loss are intrinsic to the human condition. Second, the protagonists are frustrated and saddened by the fact that both personal relationships and the study of history are impaired by our imperfect memories, which fail to retain nuances of feeling and sensory input. Third, Lives of theMonster Dogs suggests that historians must seek the truth of past events by becoming novelists. Because our memories erode and because historical documentation is fragmentary, historians, even those concerned with the recent past, approach the truth only through imaginative extrapolation.

The two narrators and protagonists, Cleo and Ludwig, both have experienced devastating losses and anticipate losses in the future. Before the dogs arrive in New York, Cleo is so heartbroken by the end of a relationship with a live-in boyfriend that she can barely function. The empty space in Cleo's life is filled by the monster dogs, whom she loves all the more passionately because she knows they are doomed: "They weren't even gone and I already missed them so much that my whole body ached....

I just didn't want to be in the world without them."

When the dogs destroyed Rankstadt and fled to New York, they lost both the security of their assigned place in its tightly structured society and the ministrations of its scientists, who, for four successive generations, had perfected the technology that produced the dog soldiers. By participating in the massacre of the human inhabitants of Rankstadt, Ludwig sacrificed those humans who had provided the dogs' lives with a mission. Ludwig, the historian, has also lost a living piece of the past. The dogs have exchanged the sensuous, earthy life of a village that replicated nineteenth-century Prussia for the sterility of a twenty-firstcentury American city.

Ludwig, of course, anticipates a much more immediate and devastating loss: he fears losing altogether his mind, or human sentience. Ludwig and, eventually, the other monster dogs suffer from episodes of memory loss that the dogs call "madness," but which is actually reversion from human intelligence to canine mentality. Ludwig remembers nothing of his periods as a typical dog, but extrapolates from the piles of feces in the corners of his apartment and scratch marks on the door. While Ludwig's memory failures are a pathological condition, he recognizes that, even for humans in full possession of their mental faculties, the dimming and distortion of memory is an inevitable fact of life. Therefore, even if Ludwig were to prevail in his desperate efforts to retain his humanity, his memory would still be an imperfect instrument.

Poignantly, the novel suggests that the nuances of a personal relationship which are the most sustaining are the very ones that we are unable to commit to memory.

Writing from the hospital, Ludwig tells Cleo that their love for one another is sustained by unremembered details: "did you ever touch my arm unconsciously, and feel

comforted by it, or look into my eyes and see an unexpected expression, which was so fleeting that you did not bother to try to figure out what it was, but which pleased you somehow, for an instant, before it was gone? You can't know, of course, because you have forgotten."

Seeking meaning in their own lives by understanding the past, Ludwig and Cleo are both preoccupied with historical memory. Ludwig and Cleo are passionately engaged in their respective historical researches.

Ludwig is writing the biography of his creator, Augustus Rank. Cleo is writing a history of the monster dogs (the book we are reading) so as to "raise any dam, however small, against the flood of time." Yet, both know that, inevitably, the artifacts and written documents to which they have access will never fully illuminate their respective subjects. Cleo and Ludwig want access to aspects of the past that the historical record fails to capture. They wish to find patterns, but are stymied because crucial pieces are missing.

Cleo and Ludwig employ their novelistic imaginations to transcend barren historical record. During Cleo's first visit to Ludwig's apartment, Ludwig tells Cleo about a visit he and his mistress made to a Rankstadt butcher shop when he was a puppy. The shop was rich in smells, sounds, and sights no longer found in the sanitized life of twenty-first-century New York. Cleo is powerfully moved by Ludwig's sensuous description: "I felt that his world wasn't as lost as he thought it was, because I could see it, the sawdust thickened with blood and pieces of half-melted snow, the damp, uneven hems of the dark skirts almost trailing in it, the shiny curls of twine. I was sure I could see it; I wanted to so badly." Ludwig's memory of the event is imperfect. He breaks off his story with the admission: "I cannot... seem to remember what the point of it was." Nonetheless, Cleo is able imaginatively to fill in the gaps.

Similarly, in his unfinished biography of Rank, Ludwig uses Rank's journals and other possessions as vehicles for imaginative extrapolation. Upon finding Rank's harmonica, Ludwig extrapolates that the brutal vivisectionist must have possessed a softer side that responded to music and to the pastoral scene on the harmonica box.

After describing Rank's emotional response to the harmonica, Ludwig tips his hand: "I am making this up, just as I have invented many little details in this story that could not possibly have survived the century and a quarter since all this happened. Do not think that I haven't meticulously researched this information.... I sometimes wonder whether the very facts that historians are capable of studying are not those with the least value for truly understanding the lives of their subjects."

Even though she is writing about events in which she played a part, Cleo experiences Ludwig's frustrations with tantalizing gaps in documentation and in her own memory. Like Ludwig, she uses her imagination to fill them in. Because she is so alive to the sights, sounds, and smells of her immediate surroundings, Cleo is frustrated by her own inability to recapture the sensations of past events. In her role as the author-editor of Lives of the Monster Dogs, Cleo struggles against the failure of historical record to

capture the sensuous texture of the past. It is Cleo's novelistic imagination that ultimately enables her to capture the reality of the monster dogs.

At the end of the book, while the monster dogs, under Klaue's direction, are killing one another, Cleo, her Samoyed friend Lydia, and Ludwig all achieve a heightened state of consciousness in which they imaginatively enter the lives of other humans and dogs. Just before sleep or upon waking, Cleo begins to have fleeting visions of people getting off a plane, looking out a window, or crying on a bus. Unwilling to dismiss these other lives as fantasy, she believes that she has begun receiving "those little, faint signals that people were sending out from all over the world, all the time." Lydia confesses to a similar experience. She sees "regular dogs, jogging along the side of a highway, or barking incessantly in a little cage at the end of someone's backyard." Cleo and Lydia agree that these visions do not represent the "unraveling" of madness, but "a kind of gathering."

Cleo explains, "it's like all these threads, these strands of other people's lives, are coming together in us."

While Cleo and Lydia participate imaginatively in the lives of living humans and dogs, Ludwig the historian has visions of the dead. Lying in the hospital, he imagines that the souls of the dead long to communicate with the living: "Sometimes you will hear one calling from very far away, very faint waves or pulses like a radio broadcast from a planet in another galaxy, scattered signals that are almost impossible to distinguish from the static." Ludwig feels the need to "piece together" what one of these voices is saying, "as an archaeologist can construct an entire body from a few splinters of bone."

Through their novelistic imagination, Ludwig and Cleo have transcended the limitations imposed by human memory and historical record. Lives of the Monster Dogs suggests that the past comes to life when approached through a combination of study and imaginative empathy.

Adaptations

An abridged version of Lives of the Monster Dogs was made into an audio book, available through Audio Literature (1997).

Male and female actors read alternate passages corresponding to the book's two narrators, Ludwig and Cleo.

Key Questions

A good place to begin discussion of Lives of the Monster Dogs might be to compare it with other fantastic and science fiction dealing with talking dogs and other humanized animals. What do these works say, metaphorically, about human beings or about our relationship with the animal world?

Reviewers of Bakis's novel have found many diverse subtexts, including AIDS and Nazism.

What subtexts, or patterns of symbolism, do you find?

1. Lives of the Monster Dogs won the 1997 Bram Stoker Award for best first novel.

The award is given to works of horror fiction. Is Lives of the Monster Dogs a horror novel? If not, what qualities might appeal to readers of horror?

2. Lives of the Monster Dogs abounds in anachronisms and improbable coincidences. Were you able to suspend belief? If so, what made the story believable? If not, why not?

3. When Ludwig is in the hospital, he writes several times to Cleo, claiming to be insane, but in possession of a "valuable piece of knowledge." Look closely at Ludwig's letters. Are they merely the ravings of a mad creature, or does he have an important insight into the human condition?

4. Why was Lydia spared the madness that afflicts the other dogs?

Literary Precedents

Advances in genetic engineering have made the creation of animals with human intelligence a scientific possibility. Though Lives of the Monster Dogs is almost antiscientific in its blatant disregard of scientific probability, it is akin to a growing number of works of science fiction that explore the moral, social, and scientific implications of creating animal-human hybrids.

The most important influence on Bakis's novel, however, predates the science of biotechnology. The prototype for Lives of the Monster Dogs and, indeed, all novels about human/animal chimeras, is H. G. Wells' The Island of Doctor Moreau. Published in 1896, Wells' novel was prompted by advances in what we would now call "plastic surgery." What is most compelling about Moreau, however, is not its now dated scientific extrapolations, but its disturbing depiction of a deeply flawed human exercising god-like control over the animal world.

In both Moreau and Monster Dogs, a sadistic scientist operates on animals to give them an upright human form, intelligence, and speaking apparatus. He then sets himself up as their deity. The artificial humanization of both Wells's beast folk and the monster dogs, however, is only temporary. As Moreau said of his creations: "the stubborn beast flesh grows, day by day, back again." Both novels end with a holocaust when predatory instincts of these hybrid beings overwhelm their learned human civility.

With advances in genetic engineering in the 1980s and 1990s, science fiction featuring human-animal hybrids has burgeoned.

Because of their evolutionary similarities to human beings, chimpanzees or great apes are an obvious choice for artificial humanization. Humanized simians, as well as dolphins who speak in Haiku, appear in David Erin's two "Uplift" trilogies: Sundiver (1980), Startide Rising (1983), Uplift War (1987); followed by Brightness Reef (1995), Infinity's Short (1996), and Heaven's Reach (1998). Robin Cook's Chromosome 6 (1997) features bonobos (pygmy chimps) who develop a "protohuman" social structure after being manipulated genetically to serve as organ donors for wealthy humans. John Gribbin's Father to the Man (1989) concerns a scientist who alters simian chromosomes so as to produce a humanly sentient offspring, prototype for a species that will ultimately replace human beings. In Stephen Gallagher's Chimera, Chad is a human-ape hybrid, the prototype of a disposable race of sub-humans created for spare parts and medical experimentation.

In Maureen Duffy's Gor Saga (1981), a scientist impregnates a gorilla with his own sperm, then brutally manipulates his own son as if he were a laboratory animal. The appealing, half-human Gor becomes a metaphor for the lower classes, considered less than human by society's elite.

Because of their lack of hands, dogs might seem a less obvious choice for artificial humanization than chimpanzees or great apes. Oddly enough, dogs vastly outnumber

simians as the fictional animal of choice for "uplift," to use David Erin's term. A seminal novel about an artificially humanized dog, written before the biotechnology revolution, is Olaf Stapledon's Sirius (1944).

Intelligent dogs appear in Mikhail Bulgakov's The Heart of a Dog (1925), Harlan Ellison's "A Boy and His Dog" (in The Beast that Shouted Love at the Heart of the World, 1969); Dean Koontz's The Watchers (1987), Fear Nothing (1998) and Seize the Night (1999); and Nancy Kress's "Dancing on Air" (in Beaker's Dozen, 1998). In Brian Aldiss's rewriting of Wells' novel, An Island Called Moreau (1981), Bernie, the Saint Bernard Man, is a more important character than his counterpart in Wells' novel.

Much of the emotional power of these very diverse works featuring humanized dogs and other animals stems from their fulfilling imaginatively our longing to communicate with the other beings that share our planet. More than any other animal, dogs regard their human masters as deities, a status any pet owner knows is undeserved. Human beings exercise a godlike power, though not necessarily a godlike care, over the destinies of all creatures, wild or tame. Stories of humanized animals are poignant because they arouse a combination of wish-fulfillment and guilt. A fictional animal's ability to speak is an imaginative gratification of a deep-rooted human desire. Bakis's dogs and other "uplifted" animals, however, pay a terrible price for a humanization they never sought.

Copyright Information

Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Editor - Kirk H. Beetz, Ph.D.

Library of Congress
Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults
Includes bibliographical references.
Summary: A multi-volume compilation of analytical essays on and study activities for fiction, nonfiction, and biographies written for young adults.
Includes a short biography for the author of each analyzed work.
1. Young adults□Books and reading. 2.Young adult literature□History and criticism. 3. Young adult literature□Bio-bibliography. 4. Biography□Bio-bibliography.
[1. Literature□History and criticism. 2. Literature□Bio-bibliography]
I. Beetz, Kirk H., 1952
Z1037.A1G85 1994 028.1'62 94-18048ISBN 0-933833-32-6

Printed in the United States of America First Printing, November 1994