

Dream baby Dream

Professor Carl Lavery

This is a paper in 3 parts. The first part provides a general introduction to the *Kong Lear Project*; the second and third parts look, in more detail, at first the 2011 film *Kong Lear* (which I will show) and, then, the performance *Gorilla Mondays*, which in many ways is the precursor to *Dream yards*, the alternative tour of the city that we'll all go on tonight. Responding to Michel Foucault's desire for an alternative form of criticism, this paper is homage to the *Kong Lear project*, an attempt to write with the work, not necessarily on it. So there's a bit of repetition, a bit of creative license, a bit of theorising. There's also a bit towards in sections 2 on 'the ecological unconscious' which might get a bit heavy, if you don't understand this or get lost, don't worry. You can always work it out later; maybe in the discussion that follows, but hopefully in your dreams. The point of the paper is to provide a kind of context for *Dream yards*, to set thoughts off, thoughts that you are welcome to affirm, test out or ignore.

Preface:

Just before the Lone Twin 'Nine Years Symposium', which took place in the Nuffield Theatre, Lancaster in 2007, Gary Winters, the tall one in Lone Twin, gave me a copy of Bruce Springsteen singing Suicide's classic piece of electronica 'Dream Baby Dream'. Looking back on it now, from the vantage point of a present (that as you listening to this has already passed), I wonder if somewhere in Gary Winters' id in 2007, a temporary collection of atoms, called Carl Lavery was trapped, and found himself dreaming that he would use Suicide's song as a kind of preface to a paper about a collaboration that Gary Winters would later enter into with the performance maker, Claire Hind, and present a paper on that collaboration at York St John University on 22 April 2013.

Dilemma

In his 1972 text *Steps Towards an Ecology of Mind*, the ecologist, and ethnographer Gregory Bateson makes the following statement:

You and I are so deeply acculturated to the idea of self and organization and species that it is hard to believe that man might view his relations with the environment in any other way (Bateson 2000: 492)

Bateson's statement is a provocation, and like all provocations, is essentially relational, something that calls out for dialogue. This paper 'Dream Baby Dream: The Ecologies of Kong Lear' is an attempt to respond to Bateson, to help him dislodge the pernicious acculturation that he speaks of. More specifically, my aim is to think about how the dispersed series of texts, images, performances, that make up the *Kong Lear* project, might allow us to re-imagine our relations with 'nature', with ourselves and with other species in an ecologically progressive way, a way that critiques what another systems theorist Bruno Latour posits as the defining feature of European modernity from the seventeenth century onwards: namely, our pathological and botched attempt to see ourselves as clean and proper subjects, some transcendental species separate from the world. This paper is a paper about ecology, about ecology in the city, about an ecological unconsciousness. It does not want to think about nature *in* the city, but to reflect on 'the city as nature'. As I hope you will see, it wants to imagine the city as a dreaming:

This is what Winters and Hind say:

But wait- let's all close our eyes and imagine a city. OK. Great, keep your eyes closed. Imagine the city. This is also New York inside Lear's mind; Kong who has escaped is running around Manhattan like a mad king. He is searching for Skull Island; lost in the civilized world he resorts to animal behavior, has a field day, hugs strangers

and does a series of roly-polies whilst recalling the untamed land he was taken from. Imagine that city (Kong Lear Archive, 2012: 19)

Dilemma

Anyone, let's imagine him, for the moment, as someone called Carl Lavery, wanting to write about Claire Hind's and Gary Winters' collaborative project *Kong Lear* is immediately faced with a series of dilemmas - a dilemma about where to start, a dilemma about where to locate oneself, a dilemma about how to write. For the uncanny thing about *Kong Lear* is not that King Lear is dreaming himself in some clairvoyant act as King Kong, star of cinema; or indeed that Kong, looking back through the centuries like Walter Benjamin's angel of history, imagines himself treading the boards of the Globe Theatre, Southwark, playing the role of Shakespeare's mad patriarch; rather, what I find so unhomely about *Kong Lear*, is that the performance has no centre, no root, no single manifestation, no real name. In *Kong Lear*, everything bleeds into everything else; all is condensation; all is displacement; all is connected, a series of pleats and folds. Baroque.

In *Kong Lear*, content and form merge in some dark continent, the continent called the unconscious, the continent called woman, the land called Skull Island, the city called York, the assemblage of

minds called Claire Hind and Gary Winters. *In Kong Lear* the traces of one performance resurface in the other; the remnant of one dream forming a latticework, a kind of oneiric tissue, with all subsequent dreams. Like the unconscious, the performance nexus *Kong Lear* never sleeps, is always in motion, proliferating, becoming more, becoming something else, seeking connections. For Hind and Winters, the smallest detail, like the fur collar worn by Paul Schofield in his performance of Lear in Peter Brook's 1971 film, becomes material for something else, a promiscuous coupling, a way to merge Lear with Kong, an instrument for an animal becoming.

Kong Lear is a plethora, a rhizome, an ever-expanding horizon. It doesn't know when to stop, it breeds, it shifts, its moves – its appropriates, too, recycling images from the dream factory of Hollywood for its own errant ends. The great gift of *Kong Lear*, its generosity, is to offer us a different kind of dreaming, a dreaming without a head, a dreaming without a king, a dreaming without father, without a phallus. This is a performance that 'ecologises' psychoanalysis that reconfigures the city as a site of play, that replaces the lonely sadness of Oedipus with the baroque assemblage of Kong Lear.

Carl Lavery has no idea what to call this performance, and in the absence of a name, he has simply termed it, as you have already

heard him say, the *Kong Lear Project*, a generic title which, to his mind, covers most of the iterations that this most decentered of performances has given rise to.

≡ *Kong Lear* is *Ghost Track*, a solo performance, an exercise in psychoanalytical stand up, in which Claire Hind reflects on her torn vocal cord; re-performs 5 times the opening section of Shakespeare's *King Lear* refracted through her memory of Kathryn Hunter playing *Lear* at the Leicester Haymarket in the 1990s; tells the stories of her dreams; and narrates how she was bitten by Bobby the dog at the Freud Museum.

≡ *Kong Lear* is a 12 minute movie shot on super 8mm film – the film that materialises nostalgia in celluloid - in which we see Claire Hind in a gorilla-suit sitting by a river, with a fake, child's crown on her head, and with heavily-made up eyes, extending the plastic, rubbery hand of Kong out to her invisible audience in a gesture replete with pathos and tragedy. Hind as *Lear*, Hind as *Kong*, Hind as *Kong Lear*, *Kong Lear* as Hind.

≡ *Kong Lear* is a lecture performance, where Hind and Winters, take turns to construct a presentation of

fragments in which reflections on the process are coupled with new research on dream production.

≡ *Kong Lear* is a series of expressionist posters in which Kong is represented as icon, image and avatar.

≡ *Kong Lear* is a batch of badges, the slogans of which are taken from the baroque mindset of Calderon de la Barca and Mercury Rev. 'All is Dream', 'I am a Dreamer', 'I put a Dream in his Head'.

≡ *Kong Lear* is an archive, a limited edition box set of loose-leaved, documents, texts, and images, which, Hind and Winters, encourage us to tip on the floor and to piece together according to a logic of chance. (TIP THE BOX)

≡ *Kong Lear* is an installation in a gallery

≡ *Kong Lear* is an exhibition of visual media

≡ *Kong Lear* is a Facebook page

≡ *Kong Lear* is *Gorilla Mondays*, a site-based performance, in which York is re-imagined as New York in the 1930s,

and then superimposed as the blasted heath in Shakespeare's King Lear, the heath where Lear loses his mind.

≡ *Kong Lear is Kong Lear's Dream yards*, an alternative tourist tour that imagines the gunnels, gunnels, and snickleways of York as a dreamscape

≡ *Kong Lear is everywhere; Kong Lear is us, where is Kong Lear?*

The Origins of Kong Lear

Kong Lear is a slip of the tongue, a momentary but hilarious collapse of meaning that took place in a conversation that Claire Hind had with her friend Tony several years ago.

Kong Lear emerges from a dream that Claire Hind had after watching the film *King Kong* aged about 6 (we are never told if it is the 1933 original or the Jeff Bridges remake in 1976). In this dream, a gorilla comes to the door and takes her away; this is a dream in which she cannot scream, a dream that will attain a certain kind of reality when, during an operation, a surgeon mistakenly cuts her vocal cord. This dream, the dream that will

feature so strongly in *Ghost Track*, will later transform and morph into a performance where the 'heavyweights' of our culture – Kong, Lear, Freud – migrate from their proper place, their species being, and form a new, hybrid composite through a logic of attraction, a logic of contagion, a viral logic.

On his arrival in New York, docked in Ellis Island, under the shadow of the Statue of Liberty, Freud said he was bringing the plague.

For the cynic, the multiple iterations of *Kong Lear* could be seen as a symptom of the capitalist spirit of contemporary art world, a world where every performance has to have numerous manifestations, a surplus value of outputs, a maximisation of potential, a series of related merchandise, a performance that consumes itself. But for the non-cynic – let's call him, Carl Lavery - it is possible to see *Kong Lear* as offering something new, as evincing an eco-logic, a logic of systems, flows and border crossings, in which everything is interconnected, joined up, coupled, emerging, showing complexity, taking on its own life, like some anarchic, productive unconscious that knows no distinction between itself and the world.

To return to Gregory Bateson, *Kong Lear* offers us 'an ecology of mind', a method for addressing the pathological error that persists in pitting humans against nature, in producing the disastrous scenario in which the organism is separated from its environment. *Kong Lear* does this by straying towards the animal, by evoking the

monster, by making things uncanny, *unheimlich*. 'Nothing comes from nothing', says King Lear in response to Cordelia's refusal to flatter him, and we must turn this against itself, and imagine it, I think, as an eco-logic, a logic of interdependences, the logic of *Kong Lear*.

This is what Hind and Winters say:

Speaking through psychoanalytic interpretations.... is to suggest that the concept of this dark space, the inaccessible part of our psyche has a playful monster that we both fear and find attractive - the *unheimlich* according to Freud is the uncanny and the monster that is mischievous - like Žižek's reference to the Marx brothers character of Harpo who he suggests is the id - silent yet mischievous and very troublesome. Harpo is the character that does not speak. In the window that was once an empty shop, *Kong Lear* stares deep into an image of herself, referencing King Kong catching his reflection in the water and recognizing himself as beast.

FILM: KONG LEAR

In the film *Kong Lear*, there is a relatively long and (what I consider to be) important sequence of intertitles that appears towards the middle of the work, narrating the story of a tragi-comic encounter

between Kong Lear and Sigmund Freud. Because of the strangely disembodied nature of the surtitles – they simply appear on the screen, as if from nowhere – it is impossible to know if Kong Lear's story about Freud is that (most paradoxical of thing) a 'real fiction', a dream, a daydream or a fantasised encounter. The status of the text is further problematised because we do not hear or see Kong Lear speak it; it seems, then, to be authorless in a way, an eruption from some collective unconscious, a story, an anxiety, a wish fulfillment perhaps, that we all share, and that, to some extent, is the very thing that connects Kong, Lear, Hind, and us, the spectators, together in some strange, hybridised confederacy. Or as Noel Carroll, a philosopher cited by Hind and Winters, puts it 'King Kong shows that Kong is not alone in his madness'.

There is great comedy in the Freud story in *Kong Lear*; we can't deny that. It's always the bit of the film that makes the audience laugh the most – but it is also, and we ought not to forget this, a tale full of frustration, anxiety that strays into the space of tragedy. 'I need to break Freud', the intertitles say twice just before the Freud text appears. The repetition of the 'I need' statement is key: it suggests some desperate imperative to emancipate oneself, to break the shackles imposed by the Freudian hermeneutic, that Oedipal triangle that relates everything back to childhood, back to the narrow topology, the violent geometry of Mummy, Daddy, Me. Ultimately, the tragedy of Freudian and Neo-Freudian analysis is that everything is already predetermined, written in advance,

scripted by the deterministic laws of Freudian theory. And, indeed, I wonder if this is one of the reasons why the film, with its washed out colours, its fading light, its portrayal of a diffident lonely Kong Lear, seems so melancholic, so sad. As if in some brilliant illumination, Kong Lear realised that Sigmund Freud needs us more than we need him. Looked at through Kong Lear's eyes, Freud really has brought us the plague, by inventing the unconscious, and selling it back to us as a lack that we can never fill. Freud, the salesman, Freud, the Pied Piper of Hamelin, Sigmund Freud become Sigmund Fraud. This, in a nutshell, is why Michel Foucault, in his 'Preface' to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, believes that we can only live the non-fascist life by rejecting Freud, by 'breaking' him, in other words:

Withdraw allegiance from the old categories of the Negative (law, limit, castration, lack, lacuna), which Western thought has so long held sacred as a form of power and an access to reality. Prefer what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity, flow over unities, mobile arrangements to systems. Believe what is productive is not sedentary but nomadic. (Foucault, 1984 xiii)

The importance of the Freud sequence to the film *Kong Lear*, and indeed to the entire *Kong Lear* project, is underlined by the fact that the text is reproduced in full on a single sheet of paper in the Kong

Lear Archive, as well as developing an idea that was already nascent in Hind's solo performance *Ghost Track*, which she has candidly described as being 'about the complexities of the psyche'.

For me, the tragedy (but also the hope) in this text is disclosed in the terrible but comic moment when Freud, looking up from his notebook, and leaning towards her, can only relate Kong Lear's melancholy – her feelings - to her childhood. For what Freud cannot see, what he, like Lear (in that most vision obsessed of plays), remains blind to, is that Kong Lear's sadness is not caused by some trauma in her childhood, some oedipal symptom, some love of her father, the phallus. Rather, it is caused, I believe, by her inability to 'roar the creatures', by her loneliness as an animal in the human polis. 'I remember my untamed days', the intertitles say, wistfully, at one point. To put this differently, Kong Lear is depressed because the human world (the world of the city, the world of York/New York), has little truck with hybrid becomings, prohibiting, as it does, all attempts to merge the 'cultural' with the 'natural', to become animal. The tragedy of Kong Lear, then, is a tragedy of repression, a tragedy that is represented but also contested by the very image of Kong Lear herself. For what the film does, with its images of Kong Lear by the river, rolling in the leaves, beating her chest in frustration in the city centre, is to allow what I call 'the ecological unconscious' a space to emerge, to play to locate itself. This is why, I think, that Kong Lear is about us all, why Kong Lear,

like King Kong, like King Lear, is never alone in his madness. For 'man's life', to cite Shakespeare, to cite Hind and winters', 'is as cheap as beasts'.

But what do I mean by the ecological conscious?

Building on the ideas of the eco critic Timothy Morton, in his 2008 publication *Ecology without Nature*, I understand the ecological unconscious to have little to do with images of nature per se. An environmental psychoanalysis is not one that would seek to 'green' our dreams by interpreting the symbolic status of mountains, rivers, streams, and certain animals; and neither would it result in a form of ecological psychiatry that would attempt to show how our phobias, hysterias and depressions can be related to real anxieties generated by climate change or increased pollution levels. Finally, the ecological unconscious has no interest in staging a return to some deep primitivist or lost Gaiaen knowledge that we have supposedly lost contact with.

For me, the ecological consciousness is always already here; coursing through us now; determining our actions; creating our thoughts, producing our world. Crucially, the ecological unconscious does not locates itself not in some pristine wilderness, but in the cities where we live. Following Bateson, and Deleuze and Guattari, I understand the ecological unconscious to work in terms of systems, interpenetrations, flows, connections, productions. There is, in other

words, no transcendental signifier, no phallus that would unlock the 'truth' of the subject *within* the ecological unconscious; instead, as I see it, the ecological unconscious, in the extent to which it displaces the primacy of the human agent, is the truth of the subject. There is no depth, no hidden meaning in the ecological conscious; its meaning is that it exists, and that it conjoins the human subject to an animal world, to a 'nature' (there is no other word) that s/he is connected to, and part of. Although it might be denied and repressed, the ecological unconscious is both determined by determining of the environment in which we live. It is integral to our notion of dwelling, integral to how we create what Gary Winters, in a performance lecture on Kong Lear, calls 'a world':

This is what Gary says:

GARY: Let's make a world – a world to be alive in and a silent world to sleep in. A world of someone as King Lear, of some-thing on film, a world of sketches. People walking around a city, people running through another city. Old things in pieces, treasured things in bits, new things boxes. A world of words on windows, Gorillas in doorways, Fools stopping the traffic, cats up the alleyway, a woman lost in a forest saying, "Help! Where am I?", Roy Orbison dreaming he is flying.

My understanding of the ecological unconscious – and I would suggest Hind's and Winters - is close to that of the eco-philosopher

Verena Andermatt Conley. Explaining how structuralism and post-structuralism can contribute to ecological thought, Conley is quick to distance herself from those ecological visions, which, as she says, 'begin nostalgically, with a longing for a return to a lost nature' (1997: 49). According to Conley, by contrast, ecology reveals itself in and through an act of decentering, when, that is, the human subject realises that it is produced through a play of different linguistic and cultural systems that it has no control over, and which exist to allow it to make sense of a world in terms that are both contingent and conventional:

Humans are in, and part of, a nature that does not preexist for them, as Cartesian thought wants us to believe. It is through social organisations, through languages and customs, through ethos and habitus, that humans attempt to make sense of a world, that in the last analysis, escapes them. (1997: 52)

Conley's ideas are counter intuitive, and so may need a little unpacking if they are to make sense. Perhaps the best place to start is with her understanding of 'nature'. For Conley, nature is not 'natural', so to speak; it is a construct. Starting with this premise, Conley argues that instead of attempting to preserve the existence of some authentic, pristine nature, we ought to come to terms with the artificiality of nature, the fact that is always a cultural/human

invention. This is not an argument, of course, that would support claims of businesses interested in despoiling the natural environment for profit, by say drilling for oil in the Arctic. Rather, Conley proposes that once we realise that 'nature' is an idea that we inherit, and which we have no direct access to, we can then start to rethink our relationship to it. Conley's desire to point out the cultural 'construction' of 'nature' troubles the anthropocentric mindset – the same mindset we find in Green Romantic as well as Promethean capitalism. By highlighting the fact that 'nature' is 'humanised', Conley reveals how nature always escapes us, eludes our attempts to know it. In this respect, and this is a poststructuralist insight, language does not allow us to rule the world by giving everything a name, and bringing it into the human domain; on the contrary, it shows that we can never grasp the meaning of the world that we have scrawled over with language. In other words, language decentres the human agent, positioning it as a mere part of the world, as artificial in its constructivism as the nature it would purport to dominate, an animal who speaks but who does not know, an '*homo non-sapiens*', then.

A psychoanalytical version of Conley ideas is found in the thinking of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. In texts such as *Anti-Oedipus*, *A Thousand Plateaus* and *Three Ecologies*, Deleuze and Guattari are critical of Freud, for attempting to sanitise and humanise the unconscious. Whereas Freud saw the animal-becomings of the Wolf-

man, and Ratman in terms of obsessional neurosis, and Judge Schreber's longings to change sex, to become woman, as signs of schizophrenia, Deleuze and Guattari interpret these desires as modes of ecological production, the attempt of the unconscious to overcome oedipal separation and to couple itself with, and connect to, the objects and material that make up world. For Deleuze and Guattari, the unconscious is ecological, because like nature, it is a type of industry, a process that creates strange, monstrous hybrids, and which troubles the idea that the human subject is somehow special in its isolation. Schizophrenia then is not an illness; it is how we exist in the world.

We make no distinction between man and nature: the human essence of nature and the natural essence of man become one within nature in the form of production or industry, just as they do within the life of man as a species. Industry is no longer considered from the extrinsic point of view of utility, but rather from the point of view of its fundamental identity with nature as production of man by man. (1984: 4)

What is interesting here is how Deleuze and Guattari think of the ecological unconscious as both reflective and part of the work of 'nature' itself. In the same that the orchid calls out to the wasp and bee, and demands a promiscuous inter-species coupling, Deleuze and Guattari make no distinction between human and non-human

creation; everything contributes to the same production: 'schizzes', fizzes, forms part of chain.

No chain is homogeneous; all of them resemble, rather, a succession of characters from different alphabets in which an ideogram, a pictogram, a tiny image of an elephant passing by, or a rising sun may suddenly make its appearance. In a chain that mixes together phonemes, morphemes, etc. without combining them, papa's mustache, mama's upraised arm, a ribbon, a little girl, a cop, a shoe suddenly turn up. Each chain captures fragments of other chains... just as the orchid attracts the figure of a wasp. (1984: 39)

Despite their vitalism, the utopian energy they attribute to the ecological unconscious, Deleuze and Guattari are concerned to avoid the pitfalls of Romanticism, a philosophy that posits nature as somehow natural, devoid of the human. As with Conley, nature in Deleuze and Guattari is not a nature we can know; rather, it is a nature that flows, that produces, that affects us, and that we work in and with. This explains why they see the ecological consciousness, as machine, as factory, as system:

It is at work everywhere, functioning smoothly at times, at other times in fits and starts. It breathes, it heats, and it eats. It shits and fucks. What a mistake to have ever said the id.

Everywhere *it* is machines – real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections (1984: 1)

Deleuze and Guattari's machinic notion of desire has much in common with the thinking of Gregory Bateson here, in particular his idea of ecology of mind. There are 2 primary reasons for this. First, because like Bateson's extended notion of mind, their notion of the ecological unconscious, the machinic *it*, forms part of a general system of energy exchange and information sharing; and second, because when the reality of that ecological unconscious is denied and repressed, as they are in Freudian psychoanalysis, pathologies ensue. The more we deny the ecological unconscious, the more we invest in what Bateson calls 'an ecology of bad ideas' that drives the planet – and everything in it – mad.

In an essay on Lake Erie, Bateson is careful to show how actual pollution (the destruction of a landscape) is always doubled with a type of mental pollution; both are interconnected in a feedback circuit:

You decide that you want to get rid of the by-products of human life and that Lake Erie will be a good place to put them. You forget that the eco-mental system called Lake Erie is a part of *your* wider ecomental system—and that if Lake Erie is driven insane; its insanity is incorporated in the larger system of *your* thought and experience.

In its celebration of hybridity, its conscious desire 'to break' Freud, and to laugh at Lacan, *Kong Lear* proposes a very different relationship to the unconscious; one that is akin to the ideas of Bateson, and Deleuze and Guattari. Tellingly, In *Kong Lear* the figures of animal, woman, child are no longer oedipalised, repressed, stigmatised, as they are in Freud's case studies of the Wolf-man, Rat Man, and Judge Schreber; rather, they are as welcomed as possibilities for 'becoming' with nature, for creating a new world, a world without a phallic signifier that would see nature as 'a standing reserve' to raid and exploit. To cite Deleuze and Guattari directly, *Kong Lear* shows how us the human being 'not as the king of creation, but rather as the being who is in intimate contact with the profound life of all forms or types of beings, who is responsible for even the stars and animal life, and who ceaselessly plugs an organ machine into an energy machine' (1984: 4). Against the forbidden bestiary of Freud, Clare Hind plugs into the animal machine, 'roars the creatures', acts out her animal and queer desires, and exists as Lear, as Kong, as Kong Lear. Her crown is a fake crown; her Lear a gorilla, a queen, precisely not a King. In changing species, in transforming her gender, Hind 'rewilds' the city, carves out a relationship where the animal can reenter the city, and where a different kind of intimacy is perhaps disclosed.

Gorilla Mondays

In *Gorilla Mondays*, Hinds and Winters are concerned to move beyond the boundaries of the screen, and to situate the ecological unconscious in York, the place where Hinds lives. They do this by mashing up the play *King Lear* with the film *King Lear* and siting their new assemblage in 5 different locations in the city:

Site one, the Fountain near to Parliament St has now become Skull Island. Here we see Kong Lear fight with toy dinosaurs and model paper planes thrown by the film crew who, as in the original 1933 movie, are following the tour and making the film Kong Lear. The city is a swamp, a site of evolutionary mutation. A plesiosaurus, a pit Lizard, a T REX are running amok in York, the island that time forgot. Then, quick as a flash, in time it takes for a sentence to be spoken, the square in Parliament St is beset with a storm, and we see Kong morph into Lear, a Lear expelled from the city, adrift on the health, a Lear haunted by what Jonny Cash has called the 'whirlwind in the thorn bush. A Lear reimagined, a city transformed.

Site Two: The Three Canes pub. Here the pub sign of The Three Cranes acts as both totem, and mnemonic, standing for Lear's daughters – Goneril, Regan, Cordelia. This is the place where Lear loses his mind; he roars the creatures, roars against his daughters, roars against the price of bitter. But this is also the moment of recognition, of *agnorisis*, when Lear imagines himself as beast, as

animal, as Kong. The Three Cranes pub, then, marks the site of great transformations and bordering crossings, the place where humans become animal

Site Three: Church Street or the Cave on the Heath. In this locale, York becomes the mythical heath in King Lear, but also the lake where Kong looks at himself, and recognizes himself as beast. In a symmetrical development from Site Two, Church St is where Kong finds himself in Lear, the place when the animal becomes human, where a strange currency is exchanged, when Jacques Lacan, the theorist of the mirror stage, has a field day.

Site Four: Snickleway or the site when Kong is captured with chloroform by Carl Denham and his explorers. Here, Kong Lear desperately seeks the blond actress, Ann Darrow who in *Gorilla Mondays* is represented by a blond wig that hovers over the heads of the audience, one of whom, man or woman – it doesn't matter which – will play her part, and take their place in an elevated lineage that includes Fay Wray, Jessica Lange, and Naomi Watts. The blonde wig is also a signifier of Cordelia, Lear's beloved daughter, the daughter who accompanies him to prison as one of 'God's spies', and is executed for her fidelity.

Site Five: York Minster and the Model City. This is the moment of fusion in *Gorilla Mondays*, the instant when Lear and Kong find

themselves in each other's unconscious, when Kong destroys New York, and when Lear looks back on and rejects the great kingdom which he had once ruled over. All this takes place, of course, in the entrance of Go Outdoors, the shop where Kong Lear renounces her kingdom, give up her life, and falls from the climbing wall, like Kong falling from the Empire State Building. Site Five is also the end, the *denouement*, the place when Lear mourns Cordelia, and realizes, in a flash of cross species empathy, that 'man's life's as cheap as the beasts'.

In the allegorical economy of *Gorilla Mondays* - and indeed there is much to be gained by reading the entire *Kong Lear Project* as allegory- York is reimagined not as a mere metropolis, but as a cosmopolitan city, a city where humans and animals co-habit, and co-exist. According to Eric Sheppard and Richard S.Lynn:

Ancient Greek thinkers conceived of the cosmopolis as a way of thinking about how humans and the natural world coexist. They made a distinction between cosmos and polis, what today we might translate as nature and culture, but also believed that universal reason pervaded all natural and human phenomena, pulling the cosmos and polis into a common orbit of ethical meaning. This was the basis for an ethics that 'followed nature', as well as 'natural law' binding all human communities. (53).

To be cosmopolitan is not simply to oppose xenophobia and discrimination in human terms alone; it is to invest in what Eric Sheppard and Richard Lynn call 'a metatheory guiding human understanding of our place in the natural world' (54). Within an urban environment, the cosmopolitanism that Sheppard and Lynn hold out for would be one in which we 'value the cultural and biological diversity of the city', and which poses significant challenges to the processes of urban politics, economics and planning that for so long have shaped the city and separated it from nature' (54-5).

In *Gorilla Mondays*, York is not the York of ghost tours and human history, a York of anthropocentric clichés; it is a York that gestures, albeit with great humour, towards the possibility of animal becomings, a tour that allows York to be glimpsed as a landscape, as a nature, that we walk through. This, for me, is where the allegorical dimension of the piece ultimately resides: in the fact Kong Lear stands as a composite for the animal, vegetal and bacterial life that human being seeks to avoid and deny in their desire to create a mere metropolis. Even though she is defeated, like her illustrious predecessors, Kong and Lear, Kong Lear's presence poses ethical questions about how we ought to relate to 'nature in the city'. It goes without saying that these questions necessarily disturb the existing political and economic practices of

the city, which as the geographer Henri Lefebvre points out, can only imagine the urban as abstract space, a space for the circulation of goods and capital. Against this, *Gorilla Mondays* posits the city as a space 'where the creatures are allowed to roar', a York, where for an all-too brief time on a Monday, the inhuman laws of capital are suspended and then superseded by the non-human claims of a nature, which we as human beings are always part of.

Importantly, the urban nature I am talking about here is not simply the nature of green spaces, gardens, parks, and allotments, etc.; rather, it is nature as rain, sun, wind, the water we drink, the waste we get rid of, the food we eat, the bodies – animal, human, plant – that we share the city space with. Urban nature, then, is sewerage systems, drains, pigeon shit, dog shit, domestic pets, feral cats, calcinated trees, the growth of fungus, poisoned, toxic weeds, the stars at night, thunderstorms. It is also, as Nigel Clark points out, the metabolisms, viruses, bacteria that circulate in the blood, cells and tissues of the human animal, that animal who shares 97% of its DNA with gorillas.

Viewed from this perspective, the end sequence of *King Kong*, the sequence that so terrorized the mind of Claire Hind aged 7, lends itself to an alternative reading. For here the object of repression is not sexual, a condensed metaphor of a desired father, a sign for a phallus, as so many critics of the film think; rather, it is ecological, a real image of a repressed and denied nature, embodied in an animal that returns to go ape, to extract its revenge, on the

ironically named Manhattan, that island which in *Gorilla Mondays* has migrated, as if in a dream, to the city of York in North Yorkshire, England.

In this respect, and as a way of bringing this paper to an end, *Gorilla Mondays* reverses and contests the human domination of the planet. For if the Anthropocene is a new geologic/chronological term that suggests that no place on the earth is free from some form of human interference and chemical contamination, then *Gorilla Mondays*, with its laughing evocation of the ecological unconscious, discloses how no human can ever escape the call of the wild. This wildness or 'untamedness' does not exist outside of us; it is lodged at the very centre of our humanness, in the bodies we carry, in the dreams we have, and, of course, in the cities we walk through.