“No Man Kills His Horse”
*Saving Animals in the Global South*

by

هنا ياسر الصافوري
Hana Yasser ElSafoory
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Words of Gratitude

**Mama:** To my best friend during my stay at ACE, Mama. Mama was a rescued cat who gave birth to her litter in the room I stayed in. She loved that room. Every night she would meow for me to let her in. She would sit by my side as I transcribed my notes and did my readings. I loved our routine.

**Manal:** Thank you for your stories and your baked vegan goods. You were so honest and open with me. I will never forget this story you shared:

Ralph was the only man I ever loved. Even my husband knows that. Ralph was German but visited Luxor regularly. At the time, I worked at a restaurant in a hotel. Every time he visited, he ate every meal in that restaurant. We fell in love. We held hands and walked around Luxor. He was the sweetest man in the world. One day I complimented his shirt and the next day he walked into the restaurant with the shirt in his hand. I still have that shirt today, all these years later, safely tucked in my closet with his scent. He knew how conservative my family was, so he proposed. My family refused. He was a foreigner with one eye. Ralph had lost his eye in an accident when he was younger, and it greatly affected his self-confidence. For me, it never bothered me. I loved him. But I could not disappoint my mother and so I married someone else. Ralph stopped visiting but we kept writing to each other. Last year, he sent me a wedding ring. It was his mother’s, a family heirloom. He asked me to keep it because I was the only woman he had ever loved. A few months after that, I got news that he died of Leukemia. I was devastated. I stayed in bed for days. The day I returned to work at ACE, a man brought in a grey stray cat that was in horrible condition. The cat had been in an accident and lost his eye, the same eye Ralph lost. We connected instantly. I love this cat and he loves me. I am the only one he loves; he does not let anyone touch him but me. He melts in my arms and climbs up to sit on my shoulder most of the day. I cannot help but wonder if he is Ralph.
**Dr. David:** You were an anthropologist at heart. You shared readings with me and analyzed ACE for me. Your critical thinking and constant reflections made this project what it is.

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To my family, both chosen and biological, thank you for bearing with me.
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Name Guide

Kim and Julie: the original founders of ACE. Julie is Kim’s aunt who is now retired. Kim still manages ACE.

Helen: Helen joined the ACE team a few years after its founding. Originally also from England, she and Kim got close and Helen became the co-manager of the hospital.

Dr. David: Dr. David was one of the first vets hired at ACE. He grew up in Luxor. His father was a farmer who had donkeys and horses.
Halfies’ dilemmas are even more extreme. As anthropologists, they write for other anthropologists, mostly Western. Identified also with communities outside the West, or subcultures within it, they are called to account by educated members of those communities. More importantly, not just because they position themselves with reference to two communities but because when they present the Other they are presenting themselves, they speak with a complex awareness of and investment in reception...halfie...anthropologists are forced to confront squarely the politics and ethics of their representations. There are no easy solutions to their dilemmas.

[Abu-Lughod 2008, 54]
This thesis comes from a conversation between my inner and youngest self, the animal rights activist, and my newly-found anthropologist self, built here at Wesleyan. Both of these revolve around animals, albeit differently. I grew up in Cairo with stray dogs and cats in my neighborhood and occasional horses and donkeys that passed through pulling fruit and vegetable carts. For as long as I can remember, I would cry at the poor animals having to live in such harsh conditions. The donkeys were beaten, the horses were overworked, and the dogs and cats were chased with rocks or played with by children. I never understood how people could be so cruel to animals. I hated people but more specifically poor people. I hated the little children who lived in the abandoned house next door who threw rocks at the dogs. I hated the farmer who forced his horse with a whip to drag a load ten times what I thought the horse could actually handle. My young, fledgling animal-rights activist self-judged such people around me and thought all they needed was an education in how to be better humans.
When I entered high school, I began volunteering with an animal rights group. I remember working on a rabies campaign at the local zoo, where I advocated publicly, for the first time, to decrease violence against stray dogs. The aim of the campaign was to educate the zoo-goers (mostly lower-middle class children with their families) about signs of rabies in dogs to show them that not all stray dogs were scary and only sick ones would bite. I explained to children how dogs can feel pain to try to persuade them not to hit strays. I do not remember much about the campaign but there were two instances that became life-changing.

**Instance 1:** A little boy looked at me as I talked about dogs feeling pain and asked: "I feel pain too, but my parents hit me, so what if I hit the dog?" I just stared, not knowing how to respond.

**Instance 2:** An older lady, who overheard what I was saying about dogs, came up to me and asked if I were a Muslim. I said yes. She then said “then why are you advocating for the devil. Don’t you know that dogs are impure?” Once again, I was tongue-tied.

The campaign I describe above was the last time I volunteered with an animal rights group in Egypt; primarily because the revolution started right after, which meant curfews and lack of social space for non-human rights centered dialogue, but also because I started feeling uncomfortable with the animal rights discourse as it appeared in the circles I was familiar with. This discourse paid no attention to context and mostly came from upper-middle-class, westernized people like me who engaged with the global animal rights rhetoric. But what was I supposed to tell that little boy or the old lady with their specific questions arising out of their specific locations? I started thinking about
culturally-relevant advocacy and the way in which people view animals differently, but also how one’s upbringing affects what they view as inappropriate behavior or “cruelty” between sentient beings. The problem at hand was not that the little boy did not know that dogs had feelings, but that dogs’ feelings did not matter because, to some, hitting a human being was normalized despite of feelings. I came to realize that human and animal rights were intertwined, or as I wrote in my college essay, “animal liberation comes hand in hand with human liberation.”

In the spirit of cyclicality, when it came time to think about writing a senior thesis, I found myself going back to my college admission essay which expressed an interest in understanding what “good” animal care and advocacy look like. At Wesleyan, I was lucky to have taken anthropology classes that center the human and animal studies classes that center the animal. I learned that the “cultures that we find ourselves ‘suspended’ within—to borrow a lovely turn of phrase from Clifford Geertz...are not exclusively human products but rather the working out of complex multispecies relations of meaning making, nourishment, and more” (Van Dooren 2018, 173). I saw my thesis as an opportunity to spend some time in conversation with both disciplines to understand complicated inter-species relationships and what caring for animals might look like within those complications.

**My Research**

To do my research, I decided to go back to where I came from: Egypt. I sent emails to organizations around the country that had caring for animals in
their mission to ask if I could spend a few months volunteering and conducting research with them. I got a lot of replies, but one especially caught my attention. I got an email from Helen (a foreigner’s name), one of the managers of a hospital called “Animal Care Egypt” (ACE) in Luxor, which said that I was welcome to volunteer and spend time with them but that I would have to find my own place to stay in Luxor: the hospital-provided housing is for “foreigners only.” Mind you, I am from Cairo, and had no knowledge about or links in Luxor, a city in a different state. I began thinking: how is this foreign woman controlling access to spaces in my own country? Why is it easier for a foreigner to give care in my own country? My thesis morphed to focus on the way that foreign caregivers (like this manager), no matter how well-intentioned they may be, can perpetuate “the structural conditions of intra-human domination and oppression that allows the Global North to position itself as righteous cops against the [savages] of the Global South” through their project of care to animals (Pachirat 2018, 343).

Kim and Julie, the British women who founded ACE, arrived in Luxor in 2000 as vacationers but stayed on because they were appalled at the state of the local horses and donkeys. They bought land and started an animal washing project as crisis relief: cool water from shower stalls would help animals cool off from Luxor’s beating sun. Eventually, they registered ACE as a charity in the UK and expanded their project to include medical care and an anti-cruelty educational program targeted at the locals who employ those horses and
donkeys. ACE’s project evolved but its mission stayed the same: working to reduce the suffering of working animals in Luxor.

I wholeheartedly believe in the importance of care and I know that ACE affects the lives of animals positively, which is why I am choosing to critically examine their practices: as they try to alleviate the pain of animals, might they be causing unintentional harm as well? Here I am channeling anthropologists, like James Ferguson (1994) and Liisa Malkki (2015), who ask us to step beyond the obviousness of good intentions and examine the effects of well-intentioned development and humanitarian projects in the Global South. I am also reminded of Michel Foucault, who wrote that:

A critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest...Practicing criticism is a matter of making such facile gestures difficult. [as quoted in Malkki 2015, 98]

In the spirit of making care more attuned to context and therefore more effective, I highlight such “unchallenged” ways. I use a historical lens to retrace Egypt’s history to understand the factors that allowed two foreign women to buy Egyptian land and assume the role of “educators” in the name of animal care. The three main questions I attempt to answer are: 1) why did the British women who founded ACE decide to focus on animal care? 2) What does care given by foreigners look like? 3) What do foreigners need to do to give more effective care to animals abroad?
Though my thesis is centered around ACE, it is important to mention another site I also visited for my research: N’aanku Se Sanctuary in Windhoek, Namibia. My original research intention was to look at two sites of animal care that were started by members of the Global North in the Global South to understand how race, colonialism and gender affect care. I, therefore, did part of my fieldwork in Namibia. This sanctuary was started in 2014 by an Afrikaans family “to conserve the land, cultures and wildlife of Namibia, Africa” (from their website, see footnote)¹ Till this day, it relies heavily on international volunteers and international donations for its operations. I learned a lot during my time at N’aanku Se, especially on land rights and indigeneity, since the project’s mission includes a dedication to conserve the San people’s cultures. However, my inability to speak Dutch or any of the local languages hindered my ability to fully understand the site. Therefore, I made the decision to focus my thesis on ACE, where my knowledge of Arabic allowed me a much deeper understanding. When appropriate, I weaved in some of my work at the N’aanku Se Sanctuary to bolster my ethnographic observations and claims regarding ACE.

**Methodology**

**Multispecies Ethnography**

Through participant observation and direct interviews with ACE management (which included Kim and another British woman, Helen),² staff

¹ [https://naankuse.com](https://naankuse.com); Accessed on April 1st, 2019. For simplicity, from herein, all digital sources will be cited through footnote rather than an in-text reference.

² I am using the real names of the founders since their names, information and story are public on the ACE website. Julie, Kim’s aunt who helped Kim start her project, is now retired.
members, and clients, I tried to understand the assumptions behind ACE’s establishment and daily work. My methodology, like most others used to study animals, however, has its constraints. My intention was to foreground the animal. I wanted to look at animals not just as symbols or tools to help me understand the interactions and power dynamics between humans but rather as individuals who are similarly social and political and who actively contribute to the shaping of their relationships with humans. I wanted, therefore, to write a multispecies ethnography, despite only being able to talk to humans; how can I understand the animal? Helmreich and Kirksey in “The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography” ask “[h]ow can or should or do anthropologists speak with and for nonhuman others?” (2010, 554). There are obstacles to representation, especially in a field like anthropology that claims to “capture other places (and other voices) through its special brand of ventriloquism. It is this claim that needs constant examination” (Arjun Appadurai as quoted in Kirksey & Helmreich 2010, 554). Anthropology is yet to succeed in capturing the voices of non-human interlocutors. What would unmediated “capturing” and ventriloquizing look like anyway? Paul Nadasdy in “The Gift in the Animal: The Ontology of Hunting and Human-Animal Sociality” traces the history of multispecies ethnography. He makes the distinction between the “functionalist ecological [and the] symbolic approach to the study of human-animal relations.” (Nadasdy 2007, 29). The first concerns the way animals benefit humans and the latter concerns the way animals could tell us more about humans. Nadasdy acknowledges that more recent anthropological works have transcended that
divide but still remain anthropocentric. Quoting Barbara Noske, Nadasdy elaborates that,

“...in addition to human-animal relationships there also exists something like an animal-human relationship and...totally ignoring the latter will lead to a one-sided subject-object approach.” Indeed, what is notably absent from both ecological and symbolic analyses of human-animal relations (as well as those studies that integrate the two) is any consideration of animals as intelligent beings with an agency of their own who might be active participants in their relationship with humans as intelligent actors in their own right. [Nadasdy 2007, 30]

I write this thesis fully dedicated to portraying animals as individuals with agency and to give them space in my thesis. Yet, I do so with the humble awareness that my language limits me, and that it does not always mirror this dedication.

Language

I use the term “animal” to refer to the cats, horses, donkeys, goats and other species in this thesis. However, I have a problem with the word. This word clumps a diverse number of species into one category and therefore, masks their nuanced differences and specificity. The animal is also seen as the non-human, situated in opposition to the human as though humans are the default against which all others are compared. Jacques Derrida, an Algerian-French philosopher, challenged human superiority by refusing to use the word animal. Instead, he came up with the word Animot. Kari Weill explains,

animot sounds like the plural of animals (animaux) even as that plural is hidden within the singular word or mot. As he puts the word animal under scrutiny...Derrida wants to suggest that the differences that exist between species and between individual
animals are far greater than the difference presumed to exist between what we call human and what we call animal. [Weil 2018, 116]

I considered using animot throughout but ultimately, for the sake of simplicity and clarity, I used the more widely used term “animal.” I ask the reader to read it critically.

Another term I use throughout this thesis is “humanitarianism” to refer to the institutionalized structure of care and saving that continues the intervention of the Global North in the Global South after the end of direct colonization. Erica Bornstein and Peter Redfield in Forces of Compassion: Humanitarianism Between Ethics and Politics trace the establishment of humanitarianism to the early nineteenth century when “efforts to alleviate suffering or advance the human race in general” were high (Bornstein & Redfield 2010, 15). Though humanitarianism might have started as a project for humans, in this thesis, I do not look at the human as subject-object of humanitarianism; rather I try to highlight the humane. I look at how definitions of what is “humane” (“not cruel,” for example) are constructed and enacted through ACE’s care project. I co-opt this seemingly anthropocentric word, “humanitarianism,” for the purpose of looking at animal care in the Global South that uses the rhetoric of crisis and saving (civilizing?) in the name of reducing animal suffering.

In my ideal world, animals would only work when they choose and would have ample time for rest, play and agency. But I was not in an ideal world. I was in an animal hospital in Luxor, Egypt in 2018. Luxor, an area that relies economically on tourism, has suffered greatly since the 2011 revolution, which
affected its number of visitors. It was in a place of scarcity that was evident in both the horses’ and the people’s visible rib cages. This thesis emphasizes context and how definitions of what is right and what is wrong depend greatly on the context in which interspecies relations are built. It was hard to carry this “looseness” and acknowledge ethical impurity when faced with animals who I thought lived harsh lives. I witnessed, with anguish, horses die right in front of me. However, unlike my younger self, my anthropologist-self felt deeply uncomfortable casting blame when people who brought the sick horse to ACE were themselves close to death. The goal is to make the readers similarly uncomfortable with casting judgement, while simultaneously advocating for the animal. It is not an easy task and I am grateful for everyone before me who attempted it and provided examples for me to follow.

Who am I in conversation with?

Coloniality, Development, Humanitarianism, and the Ethics of Care:

My story of foreign-led animal care at ACE unfolds against and engages the history of Western interventions in Egypt and the Global South more broadly. This is a troubled history of the civilizational imperative—the so-called white man’s burden—enacted first through colonialism and then through postcolonial development and humanitarian care projects.

I probe the intersections between colonization, development, humanitarianism and animal care to show how animality and animal care have historically been used to enforce racialized hierarchies between humans: between the morally, intellectually, and economically advanced (white)
Westerners and the “savage” Others, at once “animalized” as less-than-human and castigated as backward for their immoral treatment of animals. To narrate this story, I rely upon Timothy Mitchell, Arturo Escobar, and Michel-Rolph Trouillot to understand the colonial and postcolonial developmentalist history of Egypt. I also rely on Liisa Malkki, Peter Redfield and Erica Bornstein to understand humanitarian care. I bring in Michael Barnett and Naisargi N. Dave to look at how compassion works as a mobilizer for care and a signifier of moral development of the Global North. I then engage with Ticktin to complicate the seeming purity and neutrality of compassion and the moral superiority of the humanitarian industry. Through readings of Donna Landry, Maneesha Deckha, Greg Beckett and James Ferguson, I focus more specifically on how compassion toward animals and the goal of fighting animal cruelty can function as a means for establishing a hierarchy of humanity and withholding care from humans considered less “developed”—both morally and economically.

In the second half of this thesis, I make the argument that ACE needs to unembed themselves from their manifestly humanitarian mission undertaken in the name of universal rights, which disavows its deeply political effects in terms of congealing racist inequalities. Instead, I suggest that ACE take the political-economic context of Luxor and its people’s point of views and relationships with their animals seriously as guides for their care practices. Maria Puig de la Bellacasa helps me envision what an alternate model of care that acknowledges politics, agency, and context might look like. Since my focus is
on animal care, I build primarily on the ideas of Lori Gruen, Carol Gilligan, Josephine Donovan, Carol J. Adams and Donna Haraway to engage animal ethics, “cruelty,” and animal-human relations through the lens of the feminist care tradition. I bring in Sunaura Taylor’s work on disability to show how human ethics bleeds into the animal realm. I argue that an abstract, universalist animal rights ethics is not effective in helping specific animals in specific socio-historical locations. Finally, I draw on Hayder Al-Mohammad’s argument that ethics is precarious yet always present even in crisis, and so does care. I use his notion of “rough ethics” to provide an alternative to humanitarianism.

What am I Saying Next?

In Chapter 1, I begin with an overview of the colonial and postcolonial developmentalist history of Egypt, which positions Egypt as "behind" and as an object of the Western civilizing mission. I then discuss how the animal has served as a tool for making moral assessments about and interventions in colonial and postcolonial Egypt. In Chapter 2, I delve deeper into ACE’s embeddedness in mainstream humanitarianism, which claims political neutrality and moral superiority; however, as I argue, animals are political beings, and so should ACE’s work be. In Chapter 3, I tease out an alternative model of care that is less embedded in universal structures of ethics and global humanitarianism and more in the local context.

I end my thesis on an imaginative note. I take the reader back to where this project began—in Namibia—to imagine a more-than-human world with
minimal hierarchy and thick inter-species relationships. In the future, I see myself establishing an organization that provides care to animals either directly or through advocacy. Therefore, my closing also includes a list of criteria that any person interested in working in animal welfare (especially me in the future) needs to keep in mind before supporting a project; this list is not meant to be solidified or complete, but a reflexive work in process, quite like the ethical practice I advocate for. My thesis shows that animal care can easily be a mode of perpetuating inequitable racial and inter-species relations where animals and people from the Global South are not considered as full beings with desires, hopes, needs, constraints, and reasoning behind their actions. My “list” is a series of criteria to encourage support for projects that undo and push against the long histories of oppression in the name of care and improvement. My message is not that we should stop giving care to animals around the world and stop intervening. Rather, I acknowledge the lack of purity and instead stress the need to interrogate impulses to intervene to make sure that the care given is the best it can be within racist histories and the inequitable political structures care is entangled in. My first chapter looks at those structures.
The Dreaded Entanglement: Setting the Scene for intentions

It is rare to hear of people from the Global South moving to the Global North to start care projects. The opposite, however, is pretty ubiquitous and even institutionalized through organizations like the UN, Doctors Without Borders, and many others. In this chapter, I am contextualizing Helen and Julie’s decision to stay in Egypt to save animals and situating that decision in a long history of racist colonialism and its contemporary manifestations, albeit in transformed ways, in projects of care, humanitarianism and the rhetoric of development. Kim and Julie’s decision is entangled with a racist history of “saving.”

Retracing Steps: History of Colonization in Egypt

Britain took control over Egypt in 1882. After WWI, the British were officially expelled but they still maintained effective control through their influence over the Egyptian monarchy. This finally came to an end in 1954 when Egypt became an official republic following wide anti-colonial, self-
determination protests in 1952 that ousted the puppet monarchy. The colonization of Egypt, as that of other parts of the Global South, was not just a matter of extraction but a project of civilization embedded in a European worldview. In *Colonising Egypt*, Timothy Mitchell writes about the uniqueness of the British “colonising” of Egypt. Mitchell uses the word “colonising” deliberately since the British control over Egypt extended beyond direct occupation. By looking at Egypt from 1882-1954, he studies, “…the power to colonise….not simply to the establishing of a European presence but also to the spread of a political order that inscribes in the social world a new conception of space, new forms of personhood, and a new means of manufacturing the experience of the real” (Mitchell 1991, ix). European representations of Oriental realities in exhibits came to hold truth value; the reality of the Orient, in other words, was created from the perspective of Europeans for a European audience.

Exhibits held in Europe over the late 19th century became a key site for conjuring the Orient. These fairs showed Europeans what the world outside of Europe supposedly looked like; they claimed to bring (backward) oriental “reality” to a modern viewing public. In 1889, for example, Egyptian donkeys as well as people were imported into Paris, in order to take part in an exhibit on Egypt titled “Rue de Caire” (Mitchell 1991, xiii). The exhibit had to be “authentic” and believable but also entertaining and exhilarating for a European audience.

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“Reality,” therefore, had to be simplified and organized so as to be palatable for Europeans. Egyptian streets were portrayed as clean, nonchaotic, and organized spaces with happy people and happy donkeys, for this was what Europeans expected and began to see as “real.” When Europeans eventually made their way to colonial Egypt, they were taken aback by the lack of such order: “the Orient refused to present itself like an exhibit, and so appeared simply orderless and without meaning” (Mitchell 1991, xv). The colonising process, according to Mitchell, functioned like a simplified exhibit: it was about ordering the Orient in order to make it be legible and fit Western expectations. For the British, “nineteenth-century [Egypt was an] opportunity to establish a modern state based on the new methods of disciplinary power,” which worked by creating norms about a good “industrious and obedient political subject” and regulating local people according to these Western standards (Mitchell 1991, x-xi). The locals were the undeveloped savages who did not know their own potential and therefore, needed Europeans, their education system, their bureaucracies and governance. Colonialism in Egypt, then, was a project of civilizing, rationalizing, and fixing the place and the people to fit a Western standard. This project was intertwined with a particular ethical and political worldview that defined and attempted to create properly governable spaces and people, delineating, in the process, civilized from savage, good from bad.

4 This idea of the “savage” is inspired by Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s “savage slot” which is a capacious category into which the wretched of the earth (to quote Franz Fanon) of the 18th and 19th century were dumped to justify colonization (Trouillot 2003).
behavior, and tradition from modernity. Those definitions were not in relation to the Egyptian context but rather besides that context to fit Egypt and its people into its European exhibit image.

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5 Lata Mani in “Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India,” writes on the British suppression of the Sati tradition which involved the (voluntary) killing of a widow at her husband’s funeral. The British deemed this tradition unethical and therefore suppressed practicing locals, eliminated primary texts of knowledge and increased British presence in areas where the tradition was practiced. Appeals to ethics became means of expanding empire (Mani 1998). More in Chapter 3.
Image 1: advertisements for vacation packages to Egypt from a travel company named “The Anglo-American Nile Company” based in London. Luxor is a stop on all of these trips that range from 1900-1911.6

While in colonial times, Egypt was set as a picture, and an object of Orientalist desire, after the end of colonization, it became a picture of

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backwardness and a site of development interventions. The fascination with the Orient faded into a worry about it; how will the orient survive without colonialism and its ordering? Who will bear the burden of teaching the savages? Mitchell in “America’s Egypt: Discourse of the Development Industry” writes on the transition from colonialism to development. Previously colonized countries, like Egypt, became seen as models of failure, like broken down cars, that needed to be fixed piece by piece through Western saving (Mitchell 1991, 29). But, as Arturo Escobar emphasizes, such an image of the previously colonized is solely a Western truth. Yet, this Western truth became hegemonized and universalized to create “the Third World” which economically relies on the Western world’s promise of development (Escobar 1995, 6-7, 8-9). Organizations like USAID, IMF, and the World Bank dedicate their resources to the idea of development that moves the Orientalist savages into Western civilization (Mitchell 1991). What colonialism established was a view of the Global South as peoples in need of help and saving and the Global North as peoples who can provide those things. Humanitarian care was thus a direct consequence of that view; providing care and reeducation to the savages of the south out of pity or duty or guilt or just because that is the “reality” of our world. So how does animal care fit into this narrative?

In this next part of the chapter, I look specifically at how the animal became the vehicle through which the logics that shaped racist colonial regimes—the white man’s burden to civilize the dark savages—continue in the postcolonial era. Western intentions of saving and caring for animals in the
Global South need to be examined critically in light of the history of colonialism, postcolonial developmentalist, and humanitarian interventions and also scrutinized for their inequality-producing effects; for as Ivan Illich reminds us, the road to hell may very well be paved with good intentions (Illich 2018). It is with this insight that I move forward.

A few weeks into my work at ACE, things got pretty mundane. The same people and animals came through every day and I was admittedly starting to get a little bored. It was a refreshing surprise when Mario came in on day. Mario was a large, beautiful white horse with long luscious hair, piercing blue eyes and pink skin that was especially visible around the eyes and nose. He struck me as an albino, and Dr. David confirmed my suspicions. Albino horses are extremely rare. They are sensitive to the sun, but can tolerate it. The Luxor sun, however, was something else.

“Does Mario work?” I asked the man who came in with the horse. “No, No, he is just for us, he stays inside. He is a ‘khawaga’, so he does not work,” he answered.

The man spoke with such pride as he basked in all the attention he was getting from people at the hospital who were marveling at this rare and expensive horse. I do not think the man was rich; he was, after all, at a free hospital. But there was something about Mario that definitely gave him social capital: this was Mario’s association with the term khawaga.
Khawaga is a “word of Persian origin that meant ‘master’.”\(^7\) But colloquially, *khawaga* means foreigner. An Egyptian journalist, Salama Ahmed Salama, coined the term “the khawaga complex” to refer to Arabs’ complicated relationship with western foreigners which involves both feelings of inferiority and emulation. Mario’s rarity and literal “whiteness” automatically made him a *khawaga* and therefore an animal to be looked up to, protected at home and not worked. White horses apparently do not work: do I call this internalization? How do I understand Mario’s *khawaga* status against the history of the intertwinement between human racialized hierarchies and the category of the animal?

\[\ldots\]

The title of this chapter, “The Dreaded Entanglement”, refers to Marjorie Spiegel’s book *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery*. Spiegel’s book attempted to make the argument that the mechanisms that enabled slavery have continued to manifest through our treatment of animals. The book links power and violence, history and present through juxtaposing stories and photos of violence against black people and animals. I found the book uncomfortable to read. There is something simplistic about putting photos of violence against black humans and animals side by side without any context (see Image 2, for example). I chose to allude to this book in the title of this chapter to begin my engagement with the entanglement of the animal in human

power relations from a place of humility and to acknowledge the growth that the Animal Studies field has experienced.


Scholars have since critiqued the collapsing of the dehumanization (commodification) of slaves with animal cruelty considering the history of animalization of black and brown bodies. Books like *Critical Terms for Animal Studies*, for example, engage with the intersection of speciesism, racism and colonialism in much more complicated and nuanced ways. I am very grateful to be a part of this conversation.
Hierarchy of Humanity

The colonizers saw colonized people as “‘wild,’ closer to nature and subhuman” and they used science to show the “biological and physiognomic resemblances between nonwhites and animals” to cement the racist narrative that whites were civilized, and higher up the evolutionary ladder while non-whites were species of the past, stuck in a previous evolutionary phase closer to animals (Deckha 2018, 281). In other words, non-whites were not “fully” human (Deckha 2018, 280). Animals were at the bottom of the hierarchy and so were those animalized; indeed, animalization meant subordination. The full (idealized) human was the white man who could control those lower on the hierarchy: animals and those animalized. With the rise of humanitarianism, and industries of care, the full human became the one who is most capable of extending compassion and therefore, most morally developed. Animal treatment became one way of assessing humanity.

Beckett in his piece “A Dog’s Life-Suffering: Humanitarianism in Port-au-Prince, Haiti,” writes about international humanitarian NGOs in Haiti and their reliance on the figure of the animal to designate care. He makes the argument that the figure of the dog, specifically, was crucial in building the NGOs’ perception of the Haitian locals: “Haitians [were seen as] either suffering victims (treated like dogs) or inhumane barbarians (who treat dogs cruelly)” and only victims were given care for NGOs did not serve “barbarians” (Beckett 2017, 41). Thus, Animal treatment became one of the markers of moral development and therefore, who was worthy of care.
animal abuse is a sign of an “abused culture” .... the behavior of the Haitian boy [who hit a dog] should not be tolerated....the willful infliction of pain was evidence of a lack of moral development. [Beckett 2017, 4]

The above quote looks at the treatment of animals as an indication of character and morality and therefore, worthiness of care. The dialogue of development and culture obviously seeped into the discussion of care. According to Beckett’s analysis, Haitians who abuse animals were seen as not fully morally developed and their abuse of animals was a sign of their ignorance. What they needed was reeducation: a way to teach them how to be properly moral. If they refused to learn then they did not deserve to be cared for or helped by the NGOs; they were barbaric. The animal and the treatment of animals then could become a vehicle for racism. I do not mean here to minimize the mistreatment of animals. This quote was in reference to an incident where a young boy tied a rope around a dog’s hind leg and dragged him around in the dirt. I do not find those actions acceptable, at all, but I do think they should not lead to hasty moral judgements, a withholding of care or generalizations about the state of Haitian society at large: one that suffers from an “abused culture.” Cows are dragged every minute by their hind legs in pools of blood to be slaughtered around the US, and yet no arguments of inhumane barbarism are made about American culture or Americans as a whole. Some vegans make those arguments. I am not saying that such arguments are non-existent. I am simply saying that they are not normalized or systemically enforced. The condemnation of Americans and American culture for their treatment of animals in factory farms is a marginal stance.
proposes an explanation of why such dissonance exists by looking at the history of the definition of animal cruelty. She says,

...the colonial racialized associations regarding nature, the wild, and animals authorized European colonial governance over and violence against colonized and racialized humans as well as animals. As a particularly prominent example, colonial regimes frequently passed laws in their colonies against animal cruelty. Such laws purporting to cultivate compassion for certain animals facilitated colonial civilizing missions. [Deckha 2018, 280]

Anti-cruelty efforts were not really about the animals, according to Deckha. This summer, I worked with foreigners who preached against cruelty towards working horses while eating chicken sandwiches—as though the chicken did not suffer either. Deckha acknowledges this contradiction and explains how “cruelty” was historically not about the suffering of animals but rather about “‘non-Western’ animal-based practices” since anti-animal cruelty laws left industries that Europeans benefited from intact (Deckha 2018, 280). The aversion to animal cruelty was a stand in for an aversion to the morality of the uncivilized other.

Animal treatment was a way to understand morality, but it was also a way to understand economic development. There is an ironic contradiction in that model. If an individual treats an animal poorly, then they are cruel and lacking in morality. Simultaneously, if a society lets animals be and does not try to control them, then they are incapable of benefitting from the modern economic system where animals could be property that generates revenue.

In The Anti-Politics Machine, Ferguson writes about the Thaba-Tseka, a foreign-funded and designed development project in Lesotho. One aspect of
the project focused on livestock control by changing local perception of cattle. People in Thaba-Tseka valued cattle beyond money. Cattle were cultural and social symbols that were not bought and sold but rather exchanged for reasons beyond financial logic. The government, however, with pressure from the IMF and the World Bank, was trying to establish an agricultural business that relied on livestock as commodity that is bought and sold for money. One government worker explained the government’s attempt to push for their development agenda. She said, “...people take such pride in owning stock they refuse to sell them...They listen to [my] arguments politely, she noted, and seem to agree with [me], but afterwards they just ignore [my] advice” (Ferguson 1990, 138). The worker continued to say, “[t]his, [I believe] was because they lack ‘understanding’” (Ferguson 1990, 138). “Traditional” ways of viewing cattle proved to be a hindrance to successful modernization. People in Lesotho were, therefore, seen as incapable of understanding development and hence, needed to be taught. Such view was obviously false; the locals were not ignorant, they were simply uninterested in the development project, but their refusal was not acknowledged as valid moral approach to life.

Beckett and Ferguson’s pieces show how animals can serve as critical sites for the continuation of control in the postcolonial era under the guise of economic and moral development and humanitarian discourses, which erase non-Western knowledge and animal-human relationships in the name of anti-cruelty and development.
Situating ACE in this Context

With the draw of the exhibit and efforts of travel companies like “The Anglo-American Nile Company” based in London (see image 1), tourists flocked to Luxor, a beautiful spot on the Nile. British citizens vacationed there, which motivated the raising of horses for touristic leisure. As a result, there were a number of British horses in Luxor. After the start of World War I, that number of horses drastically increased. Luxor became a site of rejuvenation for the British army and the rearing of British army horses. When the war started, the British government realized that it needed up to 140,000 horses to participate in such a large-scale war (Merrick 2014, 221). They established the Remount Services division of the army, which was responsible for scaling and efficiently planning the purchase, transport and training of war horses. Many British horses were confiscated from the British countryside to supply the army. Egypt and Sudan became training and shipping sites for some of these horses due to their geographical situatedness (Merrick 2014, 220). When the war ended, some horses had faced gruesome death in combat, some had survived and returned home to Britain to be serenaded as heroes, but some were left behind on foreign soil, like in Luxor.
**Image 3:** posts by one of the volunteers at the hospital on the anniversary of WWI. The image on the left is a pigeon, a horse and a dog carrying weapons under a big purple flower. The image on the right is horses in black and white with red flowers around their ear with a little poem that ends with “We will remember them.”

Our Motto

Our name, Egypt Equine Aid, means that we are here to help the horses, donkeys, and mules of Egypt.

We have also adopted the motto “Lest we forget” because some of the horses in Egypt are descendants of Australia’s very own war horses.

It is fitting that our mission began in July 2014, the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War.

Nearly 10,000 horses were left behind in Egypt after the war, many exhibiting the outstanding qualities found in Australia’s Waaler horses, can still be seen in the horses living in Egypt today.

We never want to forget the equines of the Pyramids that are living and working in one of the harshest environments in the world.

**Image 4:** a screenshot of the mission of another animal care organization in Egypt started by Australians with a focus on the motto “lest we forget” in reference to Australian horses who came to Egypt during war time.

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9 Image source: Facebook
England had spent 64 million pounds on horses during the Great War so after the war ended, they sought to sell as many as they could to farmers around the world (Merrick 2014, 220-237). Some of the British horses in Egypt were therefore sold to local farmers and assimilated into the local fauna as working horses that aided locals. However, to many British people, British army horses deserved better than to be left in a country like Egypt. One British woman, Dorothy Brooke, was especially appalled at how these “noble horses [were] sold into a life of hard labor and utter misery on the mean streets of [Egypt].”¹¹ In 1930, upon a visit to the country, she exclaimed, “these old horses were, many of them, born and bred in the green fields of England–how many years since they have seen a field, heard a stream of water or a kind word in English?”¹² With her nationalist pleas, she raised £20,000 (modern day £128,000)¹³ from the British public to “save” these heroic horses stuck in Egypt. In 1934, she used the money to open the Brooke Hospital, which is still operational today, a few blocks away from ACE. On the Brooke website, they explain how “Within three years, Dorothy Brooke had purchased five thousand ex-warhorses. Most...had to be humanely put down. But thanks to her

¹¹ This is a quote from another care project in luxor called “Brooke” which has a very similar founding story: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/book-review-dorothy-brooke-and-the-fight-to-save_us_59e8b823e4b0153c4c3ec5a3; Accessed December 12th, 2018
compassion, they ended their lives peacefully.”14 A horse, it seems, was better dead than in the care of the savage Egyptian.

The decision to put the horses down is framed on Brooke’s website as “compassion.” Compassion is an interesting choice of word. Michael Barnett in his book *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* writes on the place of compassion in projects of care. He describes that “compassion [is] the oxygen of humanitarianism” (Barnett 2018, 224), which makes it a complicated feeling. Humanitarianism is a “mixture of care and control [since] to make the world a better place requires power. [It] ministers to the needs of others and to those of the deliverer; acts of compassion lift the givers toward the sacred” (Barnett 2018, 221). In other words, compassion is a kind of selfish “selflessness”; power and control are exerted, and inequalities are enforced, in its name. Compassion also gives missions and projects of a wide variety “a moral force,” which almost puts them beyond critique. Barnett attempts to shatter the illusion of the selflessness of compassion (Barnett 2018, 41). He writes,

To understand the spectacular growth of humanitarianism requires us to pay attention to the forces of compassion. But this is not a compassion that pulses evenly and steadily. Instead, it surges at particular moments, typically at the very same moment that the givers question their own humanity, experience spiritual desolation, wonder if they are as good as they believe themselves to be. [Barnett 2018, 224]

14 [https://www.thebrooke.org/about-brooke/history-brooke](https://www.thebrooke.org/about-brooke/history-brooke): Accessed December 12th, 2018
Barnett yet again stresses that compassion is selfish in that it has more to do with the feelings of the giver, than those on the receiving end:

Humanitarian governance relentlessly favors the views, values, and interests of the compassionate. This prejudice restages the tensions of humanitarianism. The tensions do not tug in opposite directions and result in a standoff. They produce outcomes that consistently favor the humanitarians over its subjects. [Barnett 2018, 221]

This is perhaps evident in the story of Brooke Hospital. Thousands of horses were taken away from the Egyptian labor force to be killed, because Dorothy Brooke was outraged by their situation as a dislocated “nationalist treasure” needing saving. Was death the best thing for the horse? Were the wishes of horses considered in that decision or was it more about an assertion of British superiority at a time when they were losing their control over Egypt? (After WWI, British forces were expelled and their direct control over Egypt ended).

Donna Landry in *Noble Brutes* expands upon the relationship between horses and British nationalism. It is no secret that the English loved horses but their treatment of them varied over time depending on the political context. Landry highlights a shift in horse treatment as British imperialism rose:

Apologists for imperial Britain have often adopted the rhetoric of superior civility when dealing with other cultures whether rival empires or colonized peoples…[A] new language of equine reasonableness and a loosening and lightening of control became fashionable in equestrian circles. Britons…sought to represent themselves as superior in civilization by riding lightly and exerting control by means of a silken thread. [Landry 2008, 4]
The focus on horse treatment and the extension of compassion towards them came hand in hand with war brutality and violent occupation overseas. According to Landry, compassion toward horses was a key site where British superiority and national pride were articulated in the context of a violent British Empire (Landry 2008, 3-5). Brooke’s humanitarianism is an extension of this imperialist logic, where horses become the ground to assert nationalist and racialized superiority over savage Others. ACE does not escape this history.

Image 5: a TripAdvisor review from February 2019 expressing amazement at the presence of a care project like ACE in a country like Egypt “where animals are mistreated.” To this comment, Helen, one of the managers of ACE stressed that they were “an English charity” started by people who felt like “someone should do something. And they did ….” she wrote.15

ACE was built a few streets away from Brooke by two British women, Julie and Kim, after visiting Egypt in 2000 and witnessing the conditions of working animals in Luxor. Instead of going home, they decided to stay and build ACE to provide free healthcare to all working animals. On their website, they explain:

have you ever felt like your heart was going to break? That sensation when you see something you just can’t imagine possible and have no control over? That’s exactly what happened when Kim Taylor and her Aunt Julie Wartenberg were on holiday. They saw small underfed donkeys suffering from neglect by the very owners who needed them so badly. Animals being beaten in the street. Horses with raw skin being worked with the very harness that caused the damage. Kim and Julie felt they couldn’t simply leave knowing there were so many animals needing help and so Animal Care in Egypt evolved.¹⁶

In essence, the visit to Egypt changed both their lives. Kim still lives and works in Egypt, far away from her daughter, family, and friends. This story shows another side of compassion to the one Barnett discusses. Compassion can be a powerful motivator and provide continuous sustenance for a cause. Naisargi N. Dave in “Witnessing: Humans, Animals and the Politics of Becoming” tells a story of different animal rights activists in India who have dedicated their lives to their mission because of witnessing suffering. Dave opens her article with the story of Crystal Rogers who wrote Mad Dogs and an Englishwoman. Like Julie and Kim, Crystal too was on vacation in India in 1959 but decided to stay after seeing a dying horse. Crystal wrote:

I was on my way to New Zealand when I saw a horse which caused me to remain in India. It was standing at the side of a very busy road, with the crows tearing the flesh off its back. As I ran towards it, it turned its head towards me and to my horror I saw that it had bleeding sockets from which the crows had already pecked out its eyes. I rang up the SPCA [Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals] but there was little that could be done, and the horse had to be shot. If any passerby had done something earlier the horse might have been saved. I cancelled my journey to New Zealand and stayed in India to see what I could do for animal suffering. We need to fight on every front. If we run away and hide our heads to avoid seeing the sight which horrifies us, we are unworthy of the compassion that has been granted us by the Almighty. [Dave 2014, 433]

Giving up luxuries and one's own comfort in the name of compassion was something every other activist/care provider Dave interviewed did. They were all women who chose to not turn their head away from suffering but rather to surround themselves with the discomfort and pain of witnessing to continue fighting for animals. Maneka Gandhi, another one of those activist women (though not a foreigner but a wealthy Indian politician), went as far as to wish for a slaughterhouse near her office (Dave 2014, 440). She explained that being constantly surrounded by the screams and horrors of slaughter would ensure that she would never give up her fire and will to fight for animals. In a similar vein, another activist, Carmelia Satija, kept videos of animal suffering in her office and watched them every day to keep her compassion alive amidst frustrating political realities (Dave 2014, 443). In India, laws around animals, especially cattle, are complicated by the strife between Hindus and Muslims. Muslims eat beef and slaughter cows while Hindus completely forbid it (Dave 2014, 436). When Dave wrote her piece, certain parts of India made killing
cows illegal to maintain Hindu dominance over Muslims, which meant that sick cattle could not be euthanized. The state of Rajasthan is one place where such laws exist and they directly affected Erika, who ran a sanctuary there. None of the cows that she housed and cared for could be euthanized if they got injured or painfully sick. Erika expressed frustration, but also had to spend time with the dying animals and witness their anguish. It was that witnessing of pain and the relationships she cultivated with the animals individually that kept her heavily involved in animal welfare in India at the age of 59 (Dave 2014, 447).

I mention these stories in such detail to argue for the importance of compassion. Compassion, as a feminized feeling, is sometimes easily dismissed and discredited. Following Dave, who shows the power of compassion, I don’t want to dismiss it but critique some forms it takes. Brooke’s story highlights precisely the selfishness, according to Barnett, that laces compassion. I critique compassion that is unaware of its engagement with unequal power dynamics. As Miriam Ticktin writes, in her analysis of immigration clinics in France that offer French residence to ill migrants in the name of compassionate humanitarianism, writes, “…compassion is elicited differently according to race and gender. Some…stories of suffering do not strike a chord…” (Ticktin 2006, 43). Ticktin argues that modern day humanitarianism fetishizes suffering; those deemed worth caring for are those seen as “legitimately” helpless and suffering—victims, not agents, who happen to be in unfortunate situations. You save and care for the apparently voiceless: horses who seem overworked, dogs roaming the cold winter nights, Muslim
woman who are always-already oppressed (Abu-Lughod 2013), and innocent children but not brown men who might have beaten their wives or their horses.\textsuperscript{17} Compassion, therefore, is not a feeling that is independent from racism, sexism or speciesism.

Foreign care towards working animals in Egypt began as an attempt to save the noble British horse from the mean streets and people of Egypt. Compassion was not directed at any and all animals but at a particular kind of animal from a particular threat. A horse carrying weapons and soldiers to advance British rule was noble but a horse carrying fruit to feed a family was exploited and in need of compassionate “saving.” Brooke’s story is of a British woman who decided what was best for horses based on her own racial biases and political positionality.

Though decades apart, the story of ACE and Brooke seem connected in their embeddedness in a longer politico-economic and moral history of “civilization” and the white man’s burden. In their stories, racialized Others in Egypt are deemed savage for how they treat (some) animals, and the civilizational force is embodied by white, compassionate women. In both cases, these women decided to stay in Egypt to care for the animals themselves instead of acknowledging or supporting existing efforts led by Egyptians. Were Egyptians not capable of running care projects for animals?

\textsuperscript{17} This reality of selective compassion is not something that the locals in Luxor were unaware of. Some exclaimed that tourists do not care about them and their quality of life instead, they care about animals. Therefore, people actively used malnourished and sick horses to elicit the sympathy of tourists and get money that they can then use for themselves and their families.
Manal was one of the Egyptian workers at ACE. When she was little, she lived next to a neighbor who took his anger out on his dog. Every day, Manal would try to sneak the dog out of her neighbor’s house so she could escape the man’s beatings. On one of those days, Manal noticed that the dog was pregnant. She told her dad and they both decided that this dog needed to never go back to the abusive human. Manal sneaked the dog into her house, made her a bed while the father confronted the human. After a big fight, the neighbor finally gave up and agreed to let Manal keep the dog. Manal named her Samar and lived with her and her puppies into adulthood.

One evening when the hospital did not have many patients, Dr. David, knowing what my research was about, reflected on how 70-80% of foreign projects in Egypt come out of arrogance and out of disrespect for the locals whom foreigners come to “civilize”; only 20%, show patience and work with locals. ACE has moved from the former to the latter category. Dr. David explained:

When Asmaa [the other lead vet] and I started, they had a foreign team teach us. If you did something well, they complimented you; if you didn’t, they ‘washed the floor with you’ [masahoh beeki el a’rd]. They had student vets [from abroad] teaching us. That was really hard for me. The students’ knowledge was seen as above ours. If they said something, even if I knew better from my experience, their words were the ones we followed [kalamhom meshy] because they were from England, the same country [welad beladhom] as management.
They trusted them more… At the beginning, they treated us like donkeys.

Egyptian vets and the staff employed to care for the horses knew horses well, but their decisions of care were regulated and undermined by Helen, Kim and the visiting foreign vet students whose systems of knowledge had more validity in the eyes of management. Dr. David went on to explain that now, after almost fourteen years, he and his team of Egyptian vets have proven their competence and sometimes get to teach foreign vets who visit.

ACE is a project of compassionate, immediate care that is emotionally charged. It is also embedded in the troubling discourse of humanitarianism, which continues colonialist hierarchies and has historically used compassion to be racist. ACE positions white women as saving Egyptian animals from “bad” brown subjects, so it does much more than caring for animals in need; it seems

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18 There is a hierarchy of care-givers within horse-care specifically that Rebecca Richart (2019) analyzes in “Skill and Care in Horse Racing’s Labor Hierarchy.” According to Richart, in the horse racing industry, trainers are usually white while equine workers who take direct care of the horses are underpaid and undervalued immigrant workers. She argues that despite the equine workers’ strong knowledge and skill in building relationships with individual horses, which makes their care excellent, their particular knowledge is not valued. She says, “In interviews and conversations, many equine workers expressed frustration that their employers do not listen to their suggestions, even as the trainers depend on their abilities. A groom told me that when he has tried to express his ideas about what may be better for particular horses, some trainers have told him that ‘You don’t know. I’m the trainer.’ While grooms expressed understanding that the trainers may not want to change their ways of doing things, they experienced this dismissal of their suggestions as a disregard for their knowledge and expertise” (Richart 2019).  
to use animals as a key site to propagate the difference between the West and the Rest, and a pedagogical project that attempts to discipline and civilize the locals.

Image 6: a screenshot of the comments made on a post on ACE’s Facebook page about a sick horse. The commenters make valuations about the horse’s “owner” but even take it as far as to make comparisons between the EU and Egypt. One commenter says, “some Egyptian people just don’t know how to treat animals in the right way…”

**Closing Thoughts**

This chapter looked at the history of horse care in Egypt in conversation with humanitarianism, development and coloniality. Though compassion for animals and a desire to help them is valid, that desire is not always about the

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animal but rather about the distrust and lack of belief that locals in the Global South—the previously colonized “wild” people—are capable of caring for animals as much as British people can. I say British deliberately because as Landry shows, there is something very English about caring for animals while simultaneously partaking in a violent imperialist venture. It seems that animals could easily be seen as symbols and tools of colonialist power in this historical narrative. This makes me very uncomfortable. I remain dedicated to my stated intention in the introduction to center the animal but was the animal ever centered in any of the projects I discussed above to contextualize ACE? In the next chapter, I delve deeper into the place of the animal and look more closely at intentions behind animal care.
Interrupted Intentions:
Politics and Care

If you have any sense of responsibility at all, stay...here at home. Work for the coming elections: You will know what you are doing, why you are doing it, and how to communicate with those to whom you speak. And you will know when you fail. If you insist on working with the poor, if this is your vocation, then at least work among the poor who can tell you to go to hell. It is incredibly unfair for you to impose yourselves on a village where you are so linguistically deaf and dumb that you don’t even understand what you are doing, or what people think of you. And it is profoundly damaging to yourselves when you define something that you want to do as "good," a "sacrifice" and "help."

I am here to suggest that you voluntarily renounce exercising the power which being an American gives you. I am here to entreat you to freely, consciously and humbly give up the legal right you have to impose your benevolence on Mexico. I am here to challenge you to recognize your inability, your powerlessness and your incapacity to do the "good" which you intended to do. [Illich 2018, p.6]

...planned interventions may produce unintended outcomes that end up, all the same, incorporated into anonymous constellation of control...the most important political effects of a planned intervention may occur unconsciously, behind the backs or against the wills of the “planners” who may seem to be running the show. [Ferguson 1990, 20]
**Intentions**

Why animals? Why did Brooke in 1930 dedicate her time to animal aid? Why did Kim, and her aunt Julie in 2004 leave their lives in England to resettle in Egypt in the name of helping animals?

In 2004, while on vacation, Kim and Julie explain how they were heartbroken to see “small underfed donkeys suffering from neglect” and so they decided to stay in Luxor to establish ACE with their savings. There are many potential explanations for the move including heartbreak, or potentially the pursuit of a sense of fulfillment, a desire for adventure or even a cosmic revelation of their purpose in life. But I cannot shake off my desire to understand why specifically animals.

Luxor is a rural city that economically relies on tourism and agriculture. The infrastructure is planned to support tourists rather than the local community. In the small radius around ACE, there are three hotels, including the famous Winter Palace where Agatha Christie wrote *Death on the Nile*, and two big travel agencies. There are no schools in sight. There used to be a school, but I learned that the government decided to tear it down to build a hotel and the children were forced to relocate to another school the next town over. There is, indeed, something “heartbreaking” about the disparity of wealth and access to resources visible in Luxor. Run down houses rub shoulders with million-dollar international hotels. International hospitals sit next to “local” hospitals, which a tourist described as a “stuff of nightmares! It was dirty with

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The potential for Kim and Julie to feel heartbroken and mobilize to step in and help humans in Luxor was very much possible. So, why did they choose animals?

When I was a volunteer at the N’aanku Se Sanctuary, I met volunteers from around the world. One volunteer from Holland had taken a break after finishing medical school to travel and work around Africa. Her volunteer site before the sanctuary was a children’s orphanage in South Africa. When I asked her how she felt about her work she said: “I like working at the sanctuary way better. It is easier helping animals.” In her thesis *From Volunteer Tourism Toward a (Cosmo)Politics of Solidarity*, Meghan McGuire explores this dilemma further. She discusses how volunteers working with orphans in Peru rarely felt as though they were making a difference because of the constant feeling of distance between them and those they were allegedly “helping” (McGuire 2012, 33). One of them replicated the sentiment of the volunteer from Holland to say, “I just don’t think I’m useful. If I did this again, I would do some kind of environmental work, like with the sea turtles or something. That seems easier and probably more useful” (McGuire 2012, 68). McGuire credits these feelings to the volunteers’ awareness of their positionality as outsiders who are less capable than the local workers of understanding the children, their experiences and even their language. The children were not receptive to the volunteers’ attempts to help which, as McGuire argues, “require[d] engaging not just with

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the ‘Other,’ but with the self; and perhaps, beginning to rethink these hardened, oppositional categories altogether” (McGuire 2012, 110). 22 Animals, on the other hand, are perhaps seen as “neutral.”

It feels “easier” to help animals because care towards animals, as practiced today, is not complicated by their social positionality. For humans, as McGuire shows, giving care requires a more nuanced understanding of need, privilege and positionality. This expectation is not extended to animal care. Care towards animals revolves around basic necessities. If you give an animal food, water, and a place to stay, there is an immediate sense of gratification and impact without the potential of pushback from the animal or the hard work required to understand the animals’ context, history and positionality. In a sense, animals are misunderstood by everyone. They are the “other” to locals and foreigners alike. The position of animal care giver is therefore open to anyone. Emotional pull and love towards animals have usually been a valid

22 Though I do not go into detail about the politics of volunteering abroad, voluntourism or international philanthropy, I feel the need to mention Marcel Mauss’ The Gift (1954). ACE relies heavily on foreign volunteers, donations and gifts which usually include nose-bands, medical supplies, or miscellaneous items like buckets, tape and tools to keep the facility running. As Mauss argues, giving such gifts is not a selfless act but rather a way to establish social contracts and hierarchy. The fact that the donations given to ACE (a form of a gift) come from the Global North cements the place of the Global North at the top of the moral hierarchy; they are the charity givers that help those in need. Such gifts also ignite feelings of gratefulness and the social duty of reciprocity on the part of the receiver. In this case, the receivers of the gifts—ACE, and also the hospital visitors — “owe” the volunteers. Such a state can manifest in many ways; one of which is avoiding hard topics, like addressing the inequitable power dynamics between the volunteers and the locals, to make the volunteers more comfortable and their stay enjoyable. Same goes to the relationship between ACE and the its clients. At the end of the day, ACE is giving daily gifts to the community. That is why the onus of critique and “calling out” ACE and the other gift-givers falls on people like myself who are not bound by a sense of obligation, gratefulness or a need of reciprocity to the volunteers from the Global North but rather the interlocutors from the Global South that have made my project possible.
enough explanation for the impulse to intervene and help animals. Hence Kim and Julie’s emphasis on “heartbreak” as motivation.

There is something curious about the desire to save animals and children, in that both are seen as “helpless.” Malkki argues that children are representatives of innocence and the purity of humanity. The category of the child has been depoliticized and de-historicized (Malkki 2015, 101) such that, there is little space for children who know “too much” or for children who hate particular presidents, political regimes, or, indeed, anyone. Children are not supposed to hate. They are not supposed to hurt or kill, or to be hurt or killed. [Malkki 2015, 100]

The appeal of children is their universality; they are seen as beyond race and culture (Bornstein, 2001). But, as Malkki points out, even though global humanitarianism is based on the idea of sameness and universality, it simultaneously venerates cultural difference (Malkki 2015, 99). In theory, children in faraway places are attractive to the humanitarian discourse because they instantiate universal humanity; however, in practice, their very exoticness, marked by “other” cultures and races, complicates the humanitarian agenda. Like the volunteers explained, the more distance there is between the caregiver and the care receiver (children of different cultures and who speak a different language), the harder it is to give effective care. Perhaps the appeal to “humanitarianism” towards animals is that they have the innocence of children without the complication added with issues like culture or race. Animals can stay in their ethereal and generic bubble, as maybe “neutral” subjects.
In this next section, I intend to push against this perceived neutrality of the animal to highlight their entanglement with political and social structures. I want to show that the choice to care for animals and the way that care is enacted is political and far from neutral.

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The Blessed Horse

A few days after my arrival, a large pack of people accompanied one notably large, dark black horse to the clinic. They all looked very concerned. A doctor from their area had given the horse the wrong vaccination which caused the horse to suffer from severe dehydration. One of the doctors at ACE met the crowd with a sad confession, “we are really sorry but the chances of survival for this horse are very low because of his size. It would take a huge amount of time and hydration packs to get this horse rehydrated. ACE simply cannot afford his treatment.” Without a moment of hesitation, the whole crowd said they would pay out of pocket. “The treatment could cost up to a thousand pounds.” Still, no hesitation. The men pooled their money and sent the youngest with a car to grab the necessities.

The horse died. The hospital workers who knew the family took the news very seriously. They decided to go after work to the family’s house to express their condolences. “This was a very special horse to the family,” a worker told me. He continued,

one of the family’s children was imprisoned during the revolution with a false accusation of violent protest. He was sentenced with three years [in prison]. The family was
devastated. The day they bought this horse, the child was miraculously given a pardon with half his time still left. They had a huge party that day, invited everyone, and paraded the horse. The horse was good luck.

Horses, in the context where I worked, seemed to hold a symbolically important status. A term I learnt after the incident above was “el kheil kheir” which may be translated as “horses are a blessing.” When I asked why horses? Mohammed, one of the workers who knew I was Muslim, looked at me with amazement and said, “mmhmm BECAUSE THE PROPHET SAID SO!” Mohammad’s voice was loud and in my face. He then pulled back and asked me to sit. In a low, explanatory tone he elaborated, “the prophet, our prophet, Mohammed…you know him right?” I laughed at his sassy stab at me. He continued, “well the prophet, peace be upon him, has a hadith that says ‘teach your kids swimming, archery and horseback riding.’ Horses obviously have a special place in Islam.”

Though the hadith does not explain why horses are viewed as a source of blessing, specifically, “el kheil kheir” is still a common lived expression. A man once brought an old, sick horse who was not doing well but was in the process of recovery to the hospital. He begged the doctors to check the horse into the inpatient unit. He explained that he could not have a sick horse attached to his house, “I will lose all my blessings,” he pleaded. Horses in Luxor did not

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23 Hadith is a Muslim body of text that comes second to the Quran in authority. It is a compilation of sayings by the prophet Mohammed PBUH.

24 I learned through my research that this saying is actually not a hadith but a saying by Omar Ibn el Khattab who was one of the Muslim Caliphs and close friends of the prophet. I leave the conversation intact, however, to honor Mohammed’s authentic voice.
just occupy a generic “animal” slot; rather, their symbolic significance expressed their location within local schemes.

Image 7: a Facebook post made by ACE explaining their work. They provide urgent veterinary care, preventative care and education. One stated goal is to deliver long term impact on the welfare of working animals and the people that depend on them.25

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Image 8: top image is of Kim posing in front of a camera next to a donkey. The article mentions how visitors are pleased with how ACE is improving the lives of local animals and educating locals. Bottom image is of Kim with Egyptian children. The article talks about her nomination for the “Charity Professional of the Year” award. Kim is quoted saying “We’re up against many immense challenges; every day you see abuse of animals in the street in Egypt which breaks your heart and you can’t always do anything about it.”

26 This was hung on the newsboard at the hospital. Photo was taken by me.
Complicated Neutrality

ACE gives free veterinary care to animals and education to young people in the area. In both of these spaces, however, ACE deals with the concept of the “generic” animal: the universal working horse, the universal working donkey...etc, without regard to the specific significance of each in the political, social and economic context of Luxor. Though ACE’s mission extends beyond animal care to include education, and an acknowledgement of the dependence of humans on working animals, their primary focus is on medical care to animals in need. Helen and Kim distributed Forensic Abuse and Unlawful Killing-Forensic Veterinary Pathology by Ranald Munro to all the vets at ACE. This text states:

Some veterinarians, when dealing with abused animals and their owners, [tend to] rationalize that particular circumstances mean that the perpetrators simply did not intend to be abusive. For example, they may consider that plain and simple ignorance of the needs of the animal has resulted in neglect. Or they may be aware that the owner has a particularly stressful home environment, and can therefore be excused a certain amount of violence towards a pet who has further stressed them...[I]t is unacceptable for the veterinarian to take it upon themselves to act as judge and jury when presented with any animal that has been injured...Veterinarians need, therefore, to remember that their primary responsibility is to the animal. [Munro 2008, 4]

I admire this book’s and ACE’s dedication to the animal and the message of never justifying violence or letting humans off the hook if they hurt animals. Vets should definitely focus only on the animal and their needs. However, in the context of ACE’s larger care project which also includes a dedication to education, vets are also educators. They are expected to work with the locals...
and change their perceptions of the animals. In this case, this narrow, specific, apolitical medical-care focus is not enough. The Egyptian vets recognize this and often tried to engage Kim and Helen in conversations on people’s economic situations and their justifications for how they treat their animals. In those conversations, I heard Kim and Helen stress that “this hospital is about the animal, not the people.” This response almost relieves them of the burden of learning about the political context of the animals coming to the hospital. In fact, it places not learning about context as an expectation of giving proper care at ACE.

I understand ACE’s emphasis on an apolitical notion of the animal. Apolitics is what facilitates ACE’s work. For example, the hospital is on a piece of land that the government sold to Kim and Julie (founding women). The land was fertile which is illegal to sell but nonetheless, the government did a favor for them in the name of animal care. Had ACE’s mission been political by including an anti-government stance regarding the economic or political state of Luxor or a dedication to policy intervention, or root cause analysis, I doubt they would have gotten the land. Their apolitical mission, or neutrality, stems from a humanitarian framework; ACE started in response to a perceived crisis of how animals are treated in Egypt. Tackling this problem was less about political actions and confrontation with those in power (governments and others) and more about tending to the immediate needs of those affected. Their priority was an immediate relief of suffering. Their dedication to education was an addition to their original mission. That added focus, however, did not change
ACE’s stance on neutrality to move away from their humanitarian framework. Neutrality is a hallmark of humanitarianism that Peter Redfield critiques.

Peter Redfield in “The Impossible Problem of Neutrality” looks at the historical origins of neutrality and how it came to be a tenet of humanitarian care efforts. Using examples from Doctors without Borders and the Red Cross, he makes a case to think about claims to neutrality in specific contexts to question why they are employed and to what effect. He argues that besides being an impossible standard to reach, claims of neutrality cast a veil over the “political, racial, religious, or ideological nature” of humanitarian projects and their participants (Redfield 2010, 60). That veil needs to be questioned and uncovered since it is not “an absence of political positioning” but rather “a strategic refusal with moral inflections, actively problematic and generative” (Redfield 2010, 53). In other words, claims of neutrality are a refusal to engage with the messiness of foreign care efforts. They are also a refusal to confront that the failure to realize projects’ visions of care could be due to not fully understanding the issues they are claiming to tackle.

A person with good intentions and a desire to give care might not be able to enact those intentions due to limiting outside forces. I am thinking here of Liisa Malkki’s *The Need to Help*. In the book, Malkki focuses on the humanitarian efforts of The Red Cross volunteers to show how international aid work seldom lives up to the expectations of those involved. Care-givers often adopt an air of moral superiority and high ground. However, the reality of care-giving, on the ground, is one of moral disappointment. Malkki says,
the Red Cross medical and other aid workers I interviewed in Finland often faced what one person called “impossible situations” in their international aid work. Such situations — affectively and ethically impossible somehow, impasses from which there is no obviously good way forward — can... cast long shadows. [Malkki 2015, 53]

Malkki acknowledges that humanitarian care agendas sometimes work and achieve what they claim to achieve. There still remains, however, the messier, ambiguous side of humanitarian care: when missions fail to smoothly translate to the field and there is no grand sense of accomplishment. As she says, “we need to pay closer attention to the unsatisfying and unsettling experiences that leave many of us feeling as much soiled as ennobled” (Malkki 2015, 75). Malkki delves into the gap between intentions and effects. All aid workers she interviewed had the intention of ameliorating the lives of the people they were helping but it did not always turn out that way. One aid worker, for example, realized the limitations of her position when she had to “witness exceptionally high numbers of children dying from malnutrition in one refugee camp” (Malkki 2015, 77). Beyond her own intention and position of extending care on the ground, there were economic and political realities that prevented food from reaching those that needed it and she could do nothing about it. Intentions, therefore, are complicated and transformed by outside forces. How ethical, care-based practices are made needs to be assessed beyond individual and institutional intentions in the context of larger social and political dynamics.

In this chapter, my goal is to divorce cruelty from personal, moral accusations and situate it within its context so that anti-cruelty efforts are
similarly context specific. I argue that anti-cruelty efforts beyond reeducation need to take place; the political, social and economic context needs to be tackled as well. In no way am I undermining the value of immediate care. I am rather pushing against the claim that care can remain apolitical. As Redfield points out, neutrality (an apolitical stance) rarely succeeds and care projects seldom remain unentangled with politics (Redfield 2010, 56). As I spent more time in the field, learning more about ACE, I realized that their mission of care was often shaped and interrupted by inequalities and political realities specific to Luxor.

Horse-driven carriages are an important part of the tourist economy of Luxor. The local government, however, has a complicated relationship with the carriages and their drivers, who are known as Arbageya. This fraught relationship was brought home to me one day, when I encountered two young children walking into the hospital, asking for food for their horse. I asked why they were there alone. Ahmed, one of the workers, said that their father had just died in prison, so the horse was now theirs and they were trying to figure out how to take care of him. “Rumor has it that [their father] was killed by a police officer in prison,” said Ahmed. I was taken aback by the nonchalant tone of his statement. Abanoub, a young vet, noticed my surprise and laughingly told me that imprisoning carriage drivers was normal for local police. “They go to communities with a police box [car] and fill it up with the Arbageya.” “Why,” I asked. “Because they always get into trouble with the law, they have a drinking
This conversation pointed to a distinct class of people that are identified as undisciplined through their use of animals. *Arbageya*, who are all young men, hang around the city center and tourist destinations to try to get tourists to take carriage rides with them around the city. This process usually includes shouting loudly and persistently following potential customers.27 Downtown Luxor used to have a shaded area for the *Arbageya* and their horses. The area, built by an animal welfare non-profit started by another British woman, 28 however, caught fire and was destroyed in early June of 2018. The government took this opportunity to declare that it would move all *Arbageya* out of the city center into the peripheries where carriage rides could be organized through phone calls instead of serendipitous soliciting and hassling. The project aimed to make the tourists’ experience in the city less chaotic and therefore, more comfortable (more exhibit like?). But the *Arbageya* refused to move, they blamed the government for burning down the shade area and therefore stayed in protest in the same place downtown; except now, they and the horses were exposed to the beating sun. Eventually, once it became obvious that it was worse for the tourists to see exhausted horses in the sun, the city rebuilt the shelter.

While all this was going on, Kim reflected on the role the government plays in care and cruelty. She said,

27 In one of booklets given to volunteers, ACE has a section titled “If you choose to hire a carriage” and the first point says “Always remember it is your choice which carriage you use. Don’t be bullied.”

28 I am referring here to The Brooke Foundation.
cruelty depends on what you have seen and been numbed by. Tourists...see a horse tied up and say that is cruelty. They do not know the worse reality of the animals. Tourists come here and say, ‘why don’t you put water all around the city?’ Well who would take care of that water? Who would make sure the water is refilled? Who would make sure the water is not poisoned by the government? If we live in a utopian village where people took care of each other, then maybe we would do such project, but it is just not the case.

Kim distinguishes between care in an ideal situation and care in reality. In other words, she acknowledges that regardless of impulse, care does not unfold in a bubble, but is affected by context. The context in Luxor has a lot to do with the government and how it supports people and their animals. Animals are embedded in the political sphere; they are not outside of it. Animals, like humans, suffer from unjust political systems, as in the example of the horse that was left behind when his human was killed in prison. This, however, was not the argument Kim made. She acknowledged the limitations to her own and others’ visions of animal care by reflecting on the government’s targeting of the Arbageya. However, she ultimately betrayed that analysis by falling into a racialized stereotype about Egyptians (government and Arbageya alike) as incapable of giving care. In response to the fire Kim said,

    carriage drivers are complaining but they are waiting for someone else to do something. They do not give care themselves. When the shed was there, they did not refill the water buckets or scooped the horse poop. They do not want to help each other or the animals.

Helen, the other manager, agreed with Kim.
The laziness, irresponsibility, and moral lack of Egyptians (not providing water for horses or being proactive when the shed was burnt down) inhibited the utopia of animal care from manifesting. I, however, want to push the conversation beyond personal accountability. Even if the Egyptians were proactive and wanted their horses to be well taken care of, the government makes it harder for the Arbagiyah to exist. Furthermore, the decline of tourism after the revolution²⁹ (Luxor’s primary source of income is tourism) makes it harder for anyone’s needs to be realized. In the next section I show precisely how practices of care and ethical decisions are complicated by this larger political-economic context. Specifically, I expand upon Malkki’s discussion of impossible situations and moral impasses within humanitarianism to show how apparently apolitical care for animals is very much embedded in politics. I start with a vignette about Kim—when government biases against strays forced her to do something seemingly cruel.

*The Twitching Dog in the Karnak Temple*

Early one morning at ACE, I found Kim and a foreign volunteer vet grabbing needles, a stick, a crate and some meat. They told me that they were going to the Karnak Temple to try to catch a sick dog. I tagged along to witness. Kim explained that the government was getting calls from the staff at the temple complaining about a dog that had been scaring tourists. Tourists assumed the dog had rabies because she was twitching and not walking normally. The

government planned to put poison around the temple with the hope that the sick dog would eat it. Upon hearing this, Kim and the other members of the ACE team asked the government to halt their poisoning plan and promised to personally catch the dog that was scaring the tourists to solve the problem. This was ACE’s third attempt to catch this dog. I had seen dogs with rabies; they can be scary looking with patches on their skin and often drool running from their mouths. In the car, I was preparing myself for that sight.

Image 9: a stray dog enjoying a nap on a large stone at Karnak Temple that was surrounded by rope to prevent tourists from touching it.  

What I saw, instead, was a young puppy with a glossy coat who was sunbathing with her mother and the rest of the pack on the various rocks around the temple. She looked beautiful. ACE tried to sedate her with pills in a piece of meat. When she got up to get to the food, she started twitching, she was walking in a wobbly way. She probably had a neural dysfunction. Her tail was up, and her ears were just beginning to perk. She looked happy to me. At this point, I put down my notepad and let go of my position as a “neutral,” (ha!) observing anthropologist and intervened. “Why are you trying to catch this dog

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30 Image source: photo by me.
and separate her from her family? What are you going to do with her?” “She will be put down,” Kim said. “WHAT? Why?” Kim told me that she was going to sacrifice this one dog in order to save the whole pack from poisoning. This is one of those impossible situations Malkki talks about where good intentions and goals of intervention are complicated and not realized within dynamic, messy fields. Though ACE claims care that centers the animal, in this position, they had to make a decision at the expense of an individual animal. Euthanasia could be care, but the killing of this dog was less about her wellbeing and health and more about pleasing tourists and the government.

Tourists are an integral part of the Luxor economy. If one dog poses a threat to tourists visiting the Karnak Temple, the government would put all its efforts to eliminating that threat. In this case, that meant putting poison around the temple which would result in the death of many dogs. ACE was in an impossible situation. Although Kim’s intention was to care for all animals equally, in this situation her care took a cruel form: a dog had to be sacrificed for the benefit of other dogs in the area. Ideally there would be a place for this dog, but shelters, as Kim noted later, are overflowing. For Kim, there was nothing to do but to humanely euthanize this dog. Are these the kinds of “cruel care” choices that others in Luxor also made, I wondered; to sacrifice the

31 If this idea of treading the line between being an observing anthropologist and an active ally for animals within multispecies ethnographies is of interest to you, I suggest reading: “Loving Guinea Pigs in Peru: Life, Death, and the (Im)possibilities of Collaborative Multispecies Ethnography” by Maria Elena García, forthcoming.

32 If this idea of the entanglement of cruelty and care is of interest to you, I suggest reading Thom Van Dooren’s Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction in which he discusses “violent-care” in relation to breeding birds at the brink of extinction. In chapter four, he says, “I want to encourage care for a species that has been brought to the edge of
wellbeing of their horse/donkey, for example, to feed their children? And if so, then morally judging individual acts and casting doubts on individuals’ intentions without sensitivity to context seems unfair and inaccurate. Kim, after all, is not cruel. In this situation, she did the best she could do within the limits of her context. That is the point.

**A Note on Animal Disability**

I think it is imperative here to mention that the interaction above ended with Kim trying to calm me down by exclaiming how the dog was not “normal.” She said that “normal” dogs are overflowing in shelters and no one adopts them. This dog is better off dead, “*she is not living a normal life,*” Kim said. I feel the urge to include a small section on animal disability and more specifically, Sunaura Taylor’s *Beasts of Burden: Animal and Disability Liberation.* In this book, Taylor makes the argument that ableism in the human world affects and bleeds into the relationships we have with differently abled animals. According to her,

> the assumptions and prejudices we hold about disabled bodied run deep—so deep that we project this human ableism onto nonhuman animals. They are subjected to some of our most familiar ableist narratives. For instance, the “better off dead” narrative…is a common thread in discussions of pet euthanasia and animal farming. [Taylor 2017, 24]

Reactions of fear, pity, and an instinct to save animals through extermination have a lot to do with maintaining able humans’ superiority: a particular kind of extinction; but I want also to acknowledge the, to some extent unavoidably, violent reality of the way in which much of this care for species and environments is practiced” (Van Dooren 2014, 122).
human. Taylor is contributing, therefore, to the concept of the hierarchy of humanity which argues against the equality of all people (Taylor 2017, 37). Taylor specifies that despite differences, all animals of different abilities are able to accommodate and live their life to the fullest. She mentions stories of animals thriving with disability, even reaching the highest social leadership within their groups. Taylor relies on animal observation to argue that within the animal kingdom, disability is rarely a hindrance; but ableist human conceptions believe it to be so. She says, “I imagine these animals embodying their disabilities in ways other than suffering or imagine them fostering new ways of interacting or perceiving” (Taylor 2017, 40). Disability does not automatically equate with suffering.

There are cases where disability is painful like in the case of animals rescued from factory farms. Taylor writes about Jasper and Emmet, two male goats rescued from the dairy industry. They both had caprine arthritis encephalitis which is painful. The rescue sanctuary worked on rehabilitating them both. Jasper managed to feel better and adapt to his disability, but Emmet could not and was constantly in pain. The sanctuary staff after long deliberation decided to eventually put Emmet down. Taylor understands how ethics regarding disability are contextual, euthanasia in some cases is acceptable as an act of last resort. She specifically discusses disabilities given to animals deliberately for consumption purposes like chicken being twice their normal size that they no longer can walk. In cases where disability is genetically engineered for human benefit, Taylor supports euthanasia in that it tries to undo
a deliberate wrong committed by humans. In the case of the temple dog, however, the dog was born into her body, she looked happy and managed to keep up with her pack. The assessment tourists, government officials and eventually Kim made about the dog’s state of being were so heavily affected by human ableist narratives. I understand that the decision was a utilitarian one. Had the government received another complaint from a tourist about this twitching dog, they would have put poison out for the whole pack. On that level, the decision perhaps was ethical (ableist rhetoric was maybe an explanation to make the killing feel more justified). My qualm with the decision was how lightly it was made by Kim; there was no discussion or an attempt to find another solution. More so, however, it made me uncomfortable that when confronted with other dogs of wealthy families that were more visibly suffering, the idea of euthanasia did not come up.

One man, a police officer who was known in the area for his wealth and influence, had two St. Bernard dogs. St. Bernards are huge dogs with thick, brown and white coats, and thick skin that is unsuited for hot climates. The temperature in Luxor almost reached 50 degrees Celsius (122 F). The police officer’s dogs were, therefore, suffering in Luxor’s heat. They regularly collapsed and had to be carried into the hospital for fluids. Since Luxor did not have a lot of resources, every month, the dogs were sent to Cairo to be examined and treated for dehydration and other organ problems that developed as a consequence of the heat. The heat-induced health problems meant that they were restricted to a tiny room at the officer’s house, fitted with multiple air
conditioners. Similar to the factory farm animals, their full body abilities were restricted for the pleasure of this one man. The imported dogs were a symbol of class and wealth, a mode of distinction for the policeman. These dogs were visibly suffering, panting continuously and severely dehydrated but there was no discussion about putting the dogs down at ACE. The stray temple dog was healthy and thriving with her neural dysfunction and yet, she was sentenced to that fate.\(^3^3\) This begs the question: was the decision to exterminate the dog ultimately about her wellbeing?

ACE sees its mission as care for all animals and reduction of their suffering outside of politics: the staff are expected to look at animals outside of their context. However, it is very obvious that context greatly affects the kind of “care” ACE chooses to give. The temple dog, unattached to a powerful human, was sentenced to death while the St. Bernard’s, attached to an authority figure, were given resources and a prolonged life despite of suffering. The point of the above stories is to show how caring for animals and centering them sometimes needs to be political. All animals are not the same and ACE needed to engage with the specific position of each animal and sometimes advocate for the animals who have no political or social power (like strays) on a governmental level instead of claiming to be apolitical and neutral while in fact being embedded in political structures that affect its decisions of care, as seen above. This chapter is not making the obvious argument that care “on the ground” is

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\(^3^3\) I deliberately say “sentenced” because the dog survived. She ultimately refused to eat the sedation pills in the meat. After multiple failed attempts and the dog being chased, ACE gave up and the whole pack, alarmed, relocated with the twitching dog amongst them.
complicated but rather interrogates why and when these complications are intentionally smoothed out.

**Closing Thoughts**

Decisions around care do not occur in a moral bubble, unaffected by politics. This chapter has traced situations in the field where the good intentions of extending care neutrally towards all animals were hindered. I looked at some processes that complicated ACE’s intentions of caring for all animals regardless of their context, including discriminatory government policies, ableist discourses, classism and local cultural ideas about the place of animals like horses, for instance. The decision of how to deal with animals goes beyond personal intention but rather is affected by political realities and forces; animal-human relations are at once personal and structural. The decisions people at ACE and people in Luxor make regarding their treatment of an animal goes beyond their individual and institutional abilities to feel compassion, be moral and kind to other beings. Admittedly, this chapter oversimplifies moral decisions. There is more to morality than internal intentions and outside structures that inhibit or allow them. Morality also includes the day to day, the relationships and the changes in oneself that affect our view of the world and therefore, our moral lens. This is what the next chapter is about: centering those “in-between” moments to show how specific relationships are central to making care the best it can be. I put more emphasis on context and engage with the question of accountability: how could the relationship between humans and
animals and the care extended to them be the best it can be even within disadvantageous political structures?
Leaning into the Messiness: Contextual Ethics

“Frida Kahlo once wrote: ‘They say there are two things that don’t mean anything: a dog’s limp, and a woman’s tears.’ [Dave 2014, 452]

“The question, then, is not ‘how can we care more?’ but instead to ask what happens to our work when we pay attention to moments where the question ‘how to care?’ is insistent but not easily answerable. In this way, we use care as an analytic or provocation, more than a predetermined set of affective practices.” [Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 7].

Who Decides What is Ethical?

It was my second day on site. At promptly 8AM, I walked into the clinic and the first person I saw was an old man squatting on the ground with his back to the wall. I smiled and he smiled back. He spent some time staring at me, as if to figure out where I was from. When I arrived the day before, Manal said that my facial features were very Egyptian, but that my eyebrow piercing and paler skin sent mixed messages. Who am I? I gave the man some space to answer that question and to gather his opinions about me, as I redirected my focus
onto the other person in the clinic. Loosely tied to a hook on the wall was an old-looking female donkey with her head down. I immediately concluded that the donkey was sad and in pain, and this was because of the old man. What was I supposed to think? The donkey had a huge open wound on her back with tens of flies trying to mooch off of it. What a cruel, cruel sight, and a cruel cruel man, I thought.

Much later I would learn that donkeys, out of all animals, have the highest level of pain tolerance, to the extent that they are operated on without anesthesia at times, and that when they stand with their head down, it actually means that they are relaxed. Looking back, I do not think I started off as a very good anthropologist.

After reaching my very hasty, unfounded conclusions, I decided to look back at the man and to ease his confusion about me. I now noticed his deeply etched wrinkles, calloused farmer hands and very skinny physique. He had to be at least 80 years old. I greeted him in Arabic. Mystery solved, he figured out his next move.

“Are you married?”
“No,” I laughed, genuinely amused, “I am still in school”
“Well, finish school, then come back and I will get you married to someone nice here and you can live with us”

Thankfully, Dr. David walked in interrupting what for me was a very uncomfortable conversation. He and the old man greeted each other as familiairs. Turns out, the old man was a regular.
Dr. David explained to me that the old man only had this one donkey. He relied on her to transport him and his cart of produce every day from his house to the market. Without her, the man could not work, and he could not afford a day without pay. The wound, therefore, barely had time to heal, since every day, the donkey wore a harness that rubbed against her back to help this old man. In return, to help her, the old man brought the donkey to the hospital every morning to give her a shower, rub ointment and honey on her wound and make sure she was healthy otherwise. For the past month, he had come to the clinic every day at 8 am. That was all he could do, and Dr. David accepted that. Dr. David did not jump to any easy conclusion about animal abuse. Rather he showed particularity and nuance in his assessments of right and wrong. There is a right and wrong in context of a relationship. For example, had the old man been working the donkey when he could afford to give her a rest, Dr. David’s stance would have probably been very different.

The old man asked me if the hospital had any extra cushions he could use to ease the weight on the donkey’s back. ACE had cushions with wound openings that they gave out. I ran inside to get him one. “That’s Arab chivalry,” he said, “thank you.” Little did he know that a few minutes earlier, I had thought the worst of him.

When the man got up, I saw that he had a hunchback and a severe limb problem. He could barely walk. He put the cushion under his armpit and untied the donkey slowly. They walked out of the hospital together almost in slow motion. The man limped as the donkey followed his pace, with her head down,
calm, relaxed. They were walking together in a harmony constructed over the years. Something embodied, not rehearsed.

I felt horrible. Exiling myself to the terrace that overlooked the clinic, I decided that I would spend the whole morning stuffing at least fifty of those cushions. I will not leave, I told myself. Not even for water. Horrible, horrible anthropologist, I thought again. Twenty cushions in, I started thinking: is this the best life for the donkey?

It would be easy for me to interject in this story and say that no being should have their body be used by another for labor to the point of physical damage. I do not know the perspective of the donkey, but I do know that she did not consent to this life and does not have the option of severing her relationship with the man. If I were to take this “pure” and rigid stance, my feelings of self-righteousness would be high, and the reader might begin to see me as an animal rights activist. But this stance would erase other interpretations of the situation. Is it possible that the donkey gets some sense of purpose, or sense of self, through her daily work, visit to the hospital, and shaking off flies? Is it possible that she loves her work or even loves the old man after over ten years of companionship? Is it possible that, like children born into families, she has agency within this relationship that she did not choose? Exploitation is but one possibility.

The assumption that the donkey is solely an abused victim erases other ways of interpreting her agency, of which subordination could be a part. The donkey can make a life for herself within the limits of her seemingly
disadvantageous position as a beast of burden in this story. Similarly, the assumption that the man is a cruel abuser gives him too much agency, albeit of the “bad” kind. It is possible that his economic situation limits his choices as to how to treat the donkey regardless of his ethical leanings. Assumptions about a static, always exploitative relationship between the man and the donkey also erase the power of intra-actions. “Intra-actions” is a term coined from Karen Barad. It is the idea that when particles or beings meet, their encounter causes them to change individually. So, we are all constantly changing and being affected by other beings in the world. In other words, humans and animals mutually shape one another as they engage in relationships that are specific to them. Donna Haraway in *The Companion Species Manifesto* similarly argues that humans and animals are embedded in webs of “naturecultures” in which the context affects the relationship between them (Harraway 2003, 6). Maria Puig de la Bellacasa borrows from Haraway’s theory and writes:

> Naturecultural thinking has been at work in the humanities and the social sciences, together with relational ontologies that engage with the material world less from the perspective of defined “objects” and “subjects” but as composed of knots of relations involving humans, nonhumans, and physical entanglements of matter and meaning. [Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 140]

In other words, the place of the animal and the human is not predetermined and therefore care, and ethical decisions can vary.

**Care**
In *Matter of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*, Puig de la Bellacasa engages with Joan Toronto’s *Moral Boundaries* to “thicken” her definition of care. Toronto defines care as “everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair ‘our world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible” (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 3). Puig de la Bellacasa shows how Toronto’s “as well as possible care..cannot be about a realm of normative moral obligation but rather about thick, impure, involvement in a world where the question of how to care needs to be posed….because speaking of ‘good care’ - or of ‘as-well-as-possible care’ is never neutral” (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 6).

I carry here the complexity of care to take part “in the ongoing, complex, and elusive task of reclaiming care not from its impurities but rather from tendencies to smooth out its asperities…. [this] reclaiming requires acknowledging poisons in the grounds that we inhabit rather than expecting to find an outside alternative, untouched by trouble” (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 11). Puig de la Bellacasa argues that attempts to “smooth out” care are attempts to create “hegemonic ethics” or in other words, care becomes over-simplified when the question of what is “good” and what is “bad” is taken at face value and as universally applicable without critical thinking (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 12). Puig de la Bellacasa calls for a reclamation of “ethical aspiration” where ethics is a constant dialogue and point of reflection rather than a rule book that is followed regardless of context (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 133). Along those lines, she also calls for an “awareness of the colonizing uses of the Ethics and the particular forms of biosocialities that are produced”
from it (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 133). Ethics is a huge discipline with many variations. Puig de la Bellacasa focuses on Western ethical discourse that has been a tool of colonization—fuel to missions that attempted to civilize the so-called savage.

The literature on Moral Anthropology engages precisely with this question of ethics and its relationship to power. Didier Fassin, one of the key contemporary figures of this subfield, writes that there is a need to explore “how societies ideologically and emotionally found their cultural distinction between good and evil, and how social agents concretely work out this separation in their everyday life” (Fassin 2008, 334). Fassin hypothesizes that universalistic moral convictions jeopardize cultural relativism and produce moral hierarchies. In other words, some definitions of “good” and “evil” become more valid than others and can be used as a mechanism of power and discipline.34 The call for moral anthropology is a call to understand those power dynamics around ethics. Fassin focuses on the everydayness of ethics: how individuals decide what is ethical in routine life. In this thesis, I too pay attention to this everydayness but also think through broader structural issues against which ethical practices emerge that is, how definitions of right and wrong are reproduced structurally.

34 I realize here that there is a distinction between “good vs. evil” and “good vs. bad.” Nietzsche makes those distinctions in Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future. Good and evil is associated to what he calls “slave morality” while good and bad is associated with what he calls the “master morality.” I know that there is texture to those words. For this thesis, however, I use good/right and bad/wrong/evil interchangeably (Nietzsche 1990).
In the last chapter, I make a similar argument about humanitarianism, its messiness and lack of neutrality. I wrote on humanitarianism, “impasses” and the complicated ethical decisions of care that need to be made amidst an inequitable power sphere. I argued that structures which are speciesist, sexist, ableist, classist, and racist affect ethical decisions of care that claim to be above influence. This chapter will zoom back in onto the individuals within those systems to ask: how can they be held accountable to an ethical system that navigates such structures? How can care be rethought to account for a more ambiguous and messier ethical/moral system? I am in conversation with the ethics of care and the feminist care tradition which push us to consider ethics and care contextually rather than universally.

Rather than abandoning ethics in response to [its] limitations...we might theorize in a way that recognizes that our moral experiences are so diverse and so complex that they cannot be reduced to abstractions. In ethics, this position is sometimes called ‘particularism’ and it rejects overarching codifiable ethical theories that try to produce principles to direct and motivate right action. [Gruen 2015, 26]

**Ethics of Care**

Ethics of Care is a phrase established by Carol Gilligan as an alternative to “Ethics of Justice.” Gilligan took issue with the ethics that was propagated by traditional ethicists like Lawrence Kohlberg. Kohlberg’s work focused on ethical dilemmas and moral assessment. One particularly famous dilemma he considered is the “Heinz Dilemma.” Heinz was a man with a sick wife who needed expensive medicine. Heinz tried to work hard and raise the money but eventually only got half the amount he needed. He, therefore, broke into a
pharmacy and stole his wife’s medicine. Was this ethical? Kohlberg exclusively asked young boys what they thought of Heinz’s actions in order to track moral development. He concluded that the “apex of moral development” was thinking in terms of universal principles or the ability to see detached abstractions related to rights, fairness, justice or in other words, “the ethics of justice” (Gruen 2015, 32). The highest moral development, according to Kohlberg, is creating universal rules that could be applied to as many situations as possible: accordingly, it is wrong to steal no matter what the context is. Gilligan criticized Kohlberg for focusing only on boys’ moral development and disregarding responses that centered Heinz’s relationship with his wife. According to Gilligan, the disregard of social relationships in assessing morality marked a failure to take emotions seriously due to their association with femininity. Girls are socialized to be more relational and social while boys are socialized to be more hierarchical and “rule-based” (Gruen 2015, 32). Gilligan concluded that Kohlberg’s ethical analysis was biased and needed to be countered. She thus wrote *In a Different Voice* to establish an ethics of care that was less sexist and that took affective relationality and particularity seriously, albeit cementing gender differences. Her work pushed against the separation of reason/emotion, and care/justice and paved the way for the feminist care tradition that focused less on “feminine modes of knowing” and more on the importance of both cognition and affect in making ethical decisions.

**Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics**

Josephine Donovan writes:
Many feminists, including myself, have criticized contemporary animal advocacy theory for its reliance upon natural rights doctrine, on the one hand, and utilitarianism, on the other. The main exponent of the former approach has been Tom Regan, and of the latter, Peter Singer. However incompatible the two theories may be, they nevertheless unite in their rationalist rejection of emotion or sympathy as a legitimate base for ethical theory about animal treatment. Many feminists have urged just the opposite, claiming that sympathy, compassion, and caring are the ground upon which theory about human treatment of animals should be constructed. [Donovan & Adams 2007, 174]

The feminist care tradition expounded by authors like Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams expands on Gilligan’s ethics of care. Like the ethics of care, this tradition focuses on particularity but specifically towards animal care. It centers attention as a core value; attention to differences, to context and to intentions and by default, particular and contextual moral decisions. This tradition acknowledges that suffering does not always look the same and that individual animals vary in their experience of suffering. It is therefore, not enough to have universal ethical codes around “animal rights” without attention to specificity. James Garbarino, one of the contributors to the tradition, makes a distinction between killing flowers by plowing a plot of land to feed your children and picking a flower to indulge your sense of beauty (Donovan & Adams 2007, 255). To him, despite the end result being the same—the death of the flower—there is nuance in each situation that requires different approaches to care or moral judgement. Feminist care theorists have called for an attention “to the individual suffering animal but also...to the political and economic systems that cause the suffering” (Donovan & Adams 2007, 3).
I find this an exciting call: to carry the messy, emotionally charged particular alongside clarity on bigger systemic power dynamics and a dedication to animals’ well-being. It is both rational and emotional. So, to go back to the donkey’s story, how can we make room for the possibility that the donkey had a desire to be with the old man while not forgetting her painful looking wound? How can we simultaneously acknowledge the man’s economic situation, his effort to give her what he can, and the fact that the donkey’s body is being used instrumentally for economic benefit? This is what I am grappling with in this chapter.

When it comes to relationships, there is a complicated middle between selfless love and domination. Maybe that middle describes animal-human relationships which work like human-human relationships where the parties push and pull against each other in mutual companionship and navigate the world together with the potential of hurt, exploitation and inequitable power dynamics. All relationships are not equal, especially relationships where direct communication is not possible: and so, as Bhrigupati Singh and Naisargi Dave argue, relationships with other species often “[involve] forms of mutual violence” (Bhrigupati Singh 2015, 241). There is no purity so let’s delve into the complications!

Eight-year-old Adam came into the hospital with his dad and a goat one hot July morning. The goat’s toenail was broken, and they needed the vet to trim it off. The vet used iodine as a disinfectant. Upon seeing the red liquid
flowing on the ground, young Adam took it for blood. He started crying. “He loves animals” his father said, as if to make an excuse for his crying son. No one was really paying attention to his cries. I tried to console him by doing what I thought was best: I approached him calmly, crouched down to be at his eye level and then explained simply that the goat would be fine, and that the red liquid was not blood but medicine for the toenail. “Her toe is just like yours; do you feel pain when you trim your toenails?” The more I explained, however, the louder his cries became. One of the men who worked at the hospital, a stranger to the child just like me, told him in a loud, harsh voice, “Stop crying, you are being too emotional. The goat will be fine. Go play!” Adam looked up, wiped his tears and went outside to play. “What just happened?” I thought to myself. How did the child respond better to yelling than comforting? Could yelling be comforting?

Initially, I thought gender played a role in Adam’s reaction: a woman’s comforting did not accomplish what a man’s yelling did. But the more time I spent in Luxor, the more I saw the link between yelling and care. Yelling seemed to be a routine part of exercising discipline over children but also showing them love. One of the mothers told me that she expects her daughter’s teacher to yell because yelling shows that she cares. The teacher would not be doing her job if she did not yell. Other parents saw hitting as a demonstration of good teaching. You hit and yell at a child for their own good; not to do so is to withhold love from them. You do it because you care. Maybe the way I treated Adam, softly trying to rationalize the situation, did not translate as
comfort because for him that isn’t comfort. Similarly, maybe the way the old
man treats the donkey does not take an adverse emotional toll on the donkey
because for her that is just life. It might be hard to accept the perspective I
present here; I am not sure I completely do. After all, just because something
is normalized and practiced widely does not make it “right.” I do think, however,
that it is important to push against a singular narrative of what appropriate
relationships look like to challenge comments like: “Here people do not know
that yelling at animals makes them more nervous. In England you would never
see someone yelling at their horse because they know better.”

I cannot help but wonder if I am generalizing and oversimplifying in the
above story. Of course not everyone in Luxor thinks yelling at or hitting children
is okay and even if they did, there must be root causes and explanations that
go beyond “that is how it is.” Am I falling into the trap of what ecofeminist Marti
Kheel calls “Truncated Narratives”?

**Truncated Narratives**

Truncated narratives are oversimplified, one-dimensional ethical
reasonings that disregard nuance, particularity and root-causes. It is a term
coined by Kheel to describe ethical choices that result in the actor feeling heroic
rather than enacting any positive changes in the world. The harm of truncated
narratives is that they “set up a binary in which there is a victim and a hero, and
thus obscure the possibility that the hero may be part of the cause of the larger
problem” (Gruen 2015, 13). Truncated narratives tend to sidestep “the complex
social and political structures and ideologies that are always in play” (Gruen
2015, 13). Because of their lack of particularity, such narratives can be homogenizing, condescending, culturally imperialistic and even anthropocentric.

When I first met Kim, she was quick to mention how tired she was of managing ACE. She explained that although she feels ready to retire, she cannot since there isn’t a foreigner to replace her. “Why not a local?” I asked. “I would rather have a foreigner or someone like you who lived abroad because they know standards. Here, people are lazy. They do not even want to bring their animals to the hospital,” she said. My conversations with Helen and Kim often evolved into comparisons between Egypt and the UK. According to them, Egyptians were incapable of acting ethically towards their animals, as opposed to the British. All the people of the UK supposedly behaved in a uniform manner and all the people of Luxor, who had working animals, behaved in another, less humane way. Animals everywhere, however, were the same: innocent and savable.

In reality, not all horses and donkeys are the same. In fact, the volunteer program at ACE stands to show precisely that. Foreign volunteers come to ACE from the UK to fulfill their practical requirements for their veterinary degree. “In the UK, it is hard to work with so many horses because they are expensive. People would not let students work on their horses,” Helen explained. At ACE, on the other hand, students get to work with all kinds of animals: the cheap,
accessible animals unlike species-siblings in the British countryside. The context of the animal is important.

The ACE brochure that is given to all volunteers and visitors does briefly acknowledge context. On the first page it says: “[m]any owners cannot afford to rest their animal due to their heavy reliance on them for an income. As a result, these wounds do not get a chance to heal.” But at the same time, it says, “[l]ack of education has meant that families often have little or no knowledge of how to care for these hard-working animals.” There is obviously a tension between attending to the context in which decisions regarding animals are made (hard economic realities), on the one hand, and making moral judgements about individuals’ or groups’ incapacity for caring, on the other. I am not doubting that ACE and its managers are well intentioned people, but I am acknowledging that just as I had a hard time understanding Adam and his view of the world, Kim and Helen would have to take time to understand the particular animal-human relationships in Luxor without judgement. Ethics are in many ways local and embedded in everyday practices. There is a local system of ethical judgement with its own logics, which may not correspond with their own. Understanding that system is essential for care.
Image 10: a post made by ACE on Facebook acknowledging the locals who do care about their animals and bring them to the hospital.35

“Get him, get him!!” all of a sudden, I heard Kim yelling at Dr. David, one afternoon at ACE. I saw her pointing to a man and a horse leaving the hospital. Dr. David shook his head and walked slowly toward the pair. He gestured to the man to go speak with Kim without a hint of urgency, as though he had lived this scenario before. The horse was obviously malnourished. His hip bones and rib cage pierced his skin. His face was sunken in and his eyes had no shine. The horse dragged his feet, creating a trail of dust behind him.

Horses trot, they do not drag, but I withheld judgment. I had learned my lesson after the story of the old man and his donkey.

Meanwhile, Kim was screaming at the top of her lungs and using her entire body to aggressively gesture towards the man and Dr. David. The man did not speak English, Kim did not speak Arabic and Dr. David did not want to get involved, it seemed. Kim looked at me. I jumped to translate her angry charges of abuse.

Kim wanted Dr. David to put the horse down. She was trying to convince the man to surrender his horse.

“The horse cannot walk; he is in pain. She does not think the horse will survive. You can release him from his misery. God would want that,” I translated from English to Arabic.

The man kept asking me who Kim was and why on Earth she was yelling. I found myself trying to distance myself from Kim. In a moment of confusion, I told him that she was not a doctor, “she did not even graduate high school,” I said hastily in Arabic, knowing that Kim would not understand. “Just listen to your doctor, listen to Dr. David. What did he tell you?” I do not know why I said that or why I threw her under the bus so easily. The man and the horse walked off and Kim took out her frustration on Dr. David. How could he have let that horse go? The right thing, according to Kim, was to put that horse to sleep. Tom Regan, Peter Singer, Brooke and some animal rights activists would probably agree with the ethical judgement to put this horse down but that was not the ethical system the locals ascribed to.

“No man kills his horse,” said Dr. David the next day. He continued,
what happened yesterday is perfect for your project. They [Kim and Helen] have this idea in their head of what is right without understanding the other side or having the solution. If they kill people’s horses, are they going to replace them? The man yesterday had just bought the horse five days ago and the horse was getting better. The man’s resources only allowed him to buy a weak horse and then fix him piece by piece for free here. It is like people who buy a used car because that is all they can afford. My job here is to make life better for these people struggling. Some bad people bring weak horses for us to fix and then sell them for more. There are both kinds of people and I can tell which-is-which. This man needed the help

After my conversation with Dr. David, I discussed the event with Kim and Helen. I told them what Dr. David said. Kim shook her head. “That is what they all say,” she warned. “They do not want you to think the horse got worse in their care. They say they bought it like that,” she explained, as though that was common knowledge. “You cannot believe everything these people say” was her final piece of advice. I find her comments very condescending.

It is clear that the relationship between the man and the horse was complicated by economic factors. Kim’s reaction in this scenario, however, failed to take into account the economic and social realities that Dr. David highlighted. I have to admit that at some level I understand Kim’s reaction. She did not care about the human person and their problems, she cared that the animal was physically suffering. In our anthropocentric world, human problems are often put to the forefront, and so I understand when animal rights activists and individuals concerned with animal welfare make an effort to marginalize the human and place the animal to the center of ethical debate. Though I
understand and appreciate Kim’s attempt to center the animal, I cannot help but wonder who decides that putting a horse down is what is ethical?

Kim felt very comfortable arguing for killing the horse. Like Brooke, she thought of herself as someone in a position of power who is capable of making that decision. Why? Would she have made the same argument had it been a child? It is possible that Dr. David’s analysis that “no man kills his horse” speaks to a general discomfort around ending a life. That discomfort has something to do with religion. Often times, people who came to the hospital exclaimed “haram” when the doctors suggested euthanasia. Haram is an Arabic word used to refer to actions that are not aligned with religious teachings. Life and death decisions are not meant to be made by humans, but by God and God alone. To decide to kill an animal or a human would be judged similarly in the eyes of locals: not a decision for them to make. I saw doctors who, positioned as they were between reporting to the foreigners and the locals who had different takes on euthanasia, sometimes put the animals down in secret and then told the people that the animal had died from natural causes. I remember feeling uncomfortable with this practice: why do we not believe and trust the locals and their desires? But I also thought: what about the animal? Debating euthanasia could be a thesis unto itself. I mention the issue here in context of local distrust. My discomfort stems from Kim’s distrust of Egyptians. As I did with the old man, she assumed mal-intention without considering that the relationships the people of Luxor constructed with animals were complex and built the way they are for reasons beyond ignorance. Maybe, as Dr. David said,
the man could only afford this horse and was working hard to improve his quality of life. Why was that narrative not considered? Why did Helen and Kim assume that locals lie? How can you begin to understand and break the cycles of racism and speciesism if your view of the “other” (human or animal) is rigid, distrusting and based on problematic generalizations? If Kim and Helen took part in those reflections, perhaps ACE would have been more effective. After all, in the face of being yelled at, the man simply took his horse and walked out. I never saw him again.

Dr. David was born and raised in Luxor. He saw his family and friends in the men who walked into the hospital. When I asked him what his opinion of ACE was, he said: “This is a good place. They are helping local animals that are the main source of income for people.” Dr. David saw helping animals to be a way of helping people and vice-versa. They are in relationships together and the goal for Dr. David is to ameliorate that relationship. His nuanced understanding of the human and animal conditions was evident in his analysis of the story with the thin horse. He said, “There are both kinds of people and I can tell which-is-which. This man needed the help.” Dr. David believed that he could distinguish between mal-intentioned and genuine people, who were struggling to make a living and trying to make the condition of the animals as good as possible. Kim and Helen, on the other hand, come from a different place, literally and metaphorically: they do not speak Arabic (despite living in

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36 This view is instrumental to the animal but are not all relationships instrumental? I think the give-and-take of the old man and the donkey was instrumental and yet mutual: like a friendship.
Egypt for nearly twenty years) and started ACE to reduce animal suffering in Luxor, pure and simple, and in a sense they do. Here we see a tension and mistranslation across different ethical-social worlds regarding care: the traditional abstract and the contextual particular.

ACE is not failing at its mission; the hospital does provide relief to animals in pain, but it is not changing their lives. “[Reducing] animal suffering” is the “general slogan of the animal movement” that is simply too broad (Gruen 2015, 1). “It does not convey any of the depth of the experiences particular chickens, cows, cats, and others had [have]—experiences that [make] their suffering specific for them, from their point of view” or even specific to their area and the expectations humans have of them (Gruen 2015, 1). ACE’s mission did not “adequately recognize the particular concerns, interests, worries, attitudes, sympathies, or sensitivities of actual people deciding what to do when confronting the suffering and death caused by poverty, for example” nor did it address this poverty (Gruen 2015, 11). From the point of view of straightforward animal welfare that focuses solely on the well-being of animals, ACE is doing ethical care since it relieves animal suffering but from the perspective of care tradition, their mission relies on truncated narratives that makes their care less effective and potentially performativ.

The day I arrived, during the car ride from the airport to ACE, Kim told me about her first year in Egypt. She said,

*when I first got here, I would run after the people hitting the animals and I would take their sticks and beat them with it. Now, I do not do that because I realized that it is embarrassing for the*
men to be beaten up by a woman in public and they take that
embarrassment out on the animal later. Now, I just put my hand
out and they give it to me. They KNOW it is wrong.

In telling me this story she perhaps intended to show her strong belief in and
dedication to the cause of animal welfare which has a very specific approach
to animal ethics. Her ability to stop the hitting of the animal despite fear of
repercussions from carriage drivers, made her heroic. She had a universal
ethical principle that no animal should ever be hit and she acted on that
principle regardless of context. It does show dedication, but the end result was
more suffering for the animal in the long run.

When I asked Ahmed, one of the workers at the hospital who took care
of the horses in the inpatient unit, what he defined as cruel/wrong treatment of
animals he said: “animals and humans spend so much time together. The
human can know if their animal is not okay. Some act right away and others
wait. Those who wait are cruel.”

I am reminded, here, of Lori Gruen’s analysis of attention, a foundation
of the feminist care tradition. Attention, according to Gruen, is the process that
happens in between making moral choices. Your sense of what is right and
wrong evolves based on experiences. What Gruen and other ethicist ask
people to do is to fill those “in between moments” with attention to context and
the structures they are embedded in. More precisely, Gruen asks that people
engage in entangled empathy. She describes it as:
[A] type of caring perception focused on attending to another's experience of wellbeing. An experiential process involving a blend of emotion and cognition in which we recognize we are in relationships with others and are called upon to be responsive and responsible in these relationships by attending to another's needs, interests, desires, vulnerabilities, hopes, and sensitivities. [Gruen 2015, 3]

Empathy is the ability to imagine the experience of another and grasp how one’s actions might affect them. To be empathetic is to let go a little of your concrete self to allow for imagining the experience of another. Entangled empathy adds a layer to that, it links empathy to proper care and makes it a responsibility. To provide effective care, one has to spend time being empathetic toward and understand all beings involved in order to best understand how to give care. Therefore, empathy mobilizes us to give care and also guides us in choosing what mode of care to offer. Empathy is at once personal and relational; entangled empathy requires a challenge of one’s self and willingness to reflect on it to be able to relate to as many people as possible. Entangled empathy is a prerequisite to an ethics of care. Gilligan says that this is,

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37 I want to acknowledge a side of empathy that is very much at play and not lacking at ACE: the overestimating empathy. This is the kind of empathy that overestimates the experience of the other and elicits exaggerated reactions. Lori Gruen discusses this kind of empathy and acknowledges that it may “lead people to mischaracterize the weight of certain experiences for those who are traditionally targets of these injustices” (Gruen 2015, 84). Similar to my unfounded and hasty response to the sight of the donkey with the wound on her back, this kind of empathy is confined to the self and one’s vision of the world (it is about one’s feelings, for example) rather than in relation to others and their vocalized experiences. In the case of animals, accurate empathetic responses are difficult since they cannot vocalize their own experiences, but one has to exert time and effort in learning about individual animals and their navigation of the world. In other words, empathy is not about strong feelings towards another but a cognitive effort to understand their experiences and relying on that knowledge as a base for empathy rather than on one’s assumptions.
an ethic grounded in voice and relationships, in the importance of everyone having a voice, being listened to carefully (in their own right and on their own terms) and heard with respect. An ethics of care directs our attention to the need for responsiveness in relationships (paying attention, listening, responding) and to the costs of losing connection with oneself or with others. Its logic is inductive, contextual, psychological, rather than deductive or mathematical. [web interview, link in footnote]38

This way of thinking of ethics, as a varied, contextual, relational code of conduct requires a lot of work to figure out how to minimize exploitation in a situation where what is right or what ideal care looks like is not always clear. This form of ethics puts a burden on reflection and reconfiguration of the self and one’s ethical system to understand the other and their ethical systems to give care as well as possible. Ethical, entangled care is embedded right there in this unscripted messiness as dynamic, and responsive, and with “a range of different understandings and appropriations” (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, 10). I ask the reader to consider the ethics upon which care is extended as contextual, and relational rather than universal. Indeed, universal ethics is precarious and seldom results in the intended care.

To some readers, this model of care might sound too idealistic or elicit a false sense of Kum ba yah: everyone sitting together getting to know each other. The reader might then think that this model does not work in areas of conflict and therefore does not do what I intend it to do: challenge the development rhetoric and the humanitarian care model that is based on neutral crisis relief

in the Global South. I push against this assumption and argue that the ethics of care is especially important in crisis.

**Rough Ground Ethics**

The humanitarian model is based on the belief that in times of crisis (development discourse sees the third world in perpetual crisis), there is a need for an outside support to regulate and ensure that ethics and care do not cease to exist. In the spirit of saving and the white (wo)man’s burden, humanitarians from the Global North intervene to ensure that within this instability, the savages are not too savage: there is still a continuation of care and ethical relations. In other words, once there is instability, there is an assumption that the savages would no longer be controlled, and chaotic disorder will wreak havoc. Haydar Al-Mohammad in “Poverty beyond Disaster in Postinvasion Iraq: Ethics and the ‘Rough Ground’ of the Everyday” argues the exact opposite. In Iraq, after the destructions of the war and the dismemberment of national structures, people tended to react to this crisis by developing a new kind of ethics and a new model of care that focus on interpersonal relations. Instead of savagery, what came to light during crisis is the most humane: people pooling money to help their neighbor, sharing the little food available with everyone...etc. Al-Mohammad shows that there was no moral unraveling in Iraq but a new kind of ethics. This is what he calls “rough ground ethics” or “an understanding of ethics [that] does not exclude some of the callousness, violence, and indifference of everyday life [and power dynamics]” (Al-Mohammad 2015, 114). Rough ground ethics acknowledges that context
during instability could be far from utopian (involves suffering, death, hardship) and therefore, the kind of ethics needed in that context is one that,

is neither judged nor understood against an ideal of the Good, or extracontextual, imperatives. Rather, [it] is one understood in terms of the ways in which life is not only open to the pain, suffering, joy, and ennui of others but also to how, in the entanglements and relations of our lives with other lives in the everyday, lines of care and concern emerge, are fostered, and also frayed. [Al-Mohammad 2015, 109]

In other words, the tenets of the ethics of care: attention, entangled empathy, understanding of context, reflection about one’s positionality and responsibility are all heightened in times of crisis. If an outsider decides to extend care to a community they perceive as in crisis, they need to spend time understanding the ethical networks and the models of care that community has built for itself. Care therefore needs to be attentive to the political, social and economic context rather than supposedly neutral and unrooted.

**Why is a Focus on this kind of Care Important?**

So far in this thesis I have looked at power and big systems that are historically embedded and how they affect present day interactions between people from the Global North and those from the Global South. Humanitarianism and care are definitely worth dissecting but what now? This chapter was meant to show the importance of particularity and balancing big structures with individual actions on the ground that seek to change lives. If we zoom on the level of the particular, ACE looks very different. It is a place where a man with a horse could ask “who is this woman and why is she yelling” in the
face of the supposedly powerful and privileged white British woman and then walk out with his horse untouched. It is a place where vets who were once treated “as donkeys” (to reference Dr. David) now lead training sessions for visiting vets who have never seen a goat or a donkey before. It is a place where Egyptians have the final say because of their ability to speak Arabic and to connect with the locals. Kim and Helen might think they know what is best for the animals and might have created a mission for ACE that aligns with their universal animal ethics views. However, their inability to speak Arabic and their lack of understanding of the culture, allows Dr. David to take advantage of the gaps in their knowledge and to support locals the way he and them think best.

In this particular place, we find the hospital workers using the land sold by the Egyptian government to foreigners to grow food: they created a large agricultural plot they cultivated for themselves at the back of the hospital. Every Friday, after management has left, produce is distributed equally amongst all the employees and others in the area when there is enough to go around.39

Nasser, one of the employees, described how Baladi horses, the descendants of British and Egyptian horses who have procreated over the

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39 This reminds me of Haydar Al-Mohammad’s piece referenced earlier: “Poverty beyond Disaster in Postinvasion Iraq: Ethics and the “Rough Ground” of the Everyday” where he writes about Iraqis strengthening their social networks, interpersonal reliance and aid as resistance to the unfortunate state of their country which leaves most in need. Al-Mohammad says “... if one turns to the everyday in Iraq, one can find small gestures, moments of kindness and care, that are not simply positive tales contained within the destruction of post-invasion Iraq but are the very grounds by which many Iraqis have been able to survive and live through the terror and uncertainty of the last decade” (Al-Mohammad 2015, 111).
years, are known to have more personality than any other horse. They are stubborn and seldom give in to behavioral training. No matter how much you try to train them, they always find a way to push back and remind you that the only way they would cooperate is by choice, not by force.
An opening of Imagination

Over a number of years, I have been arguing against the claim that moral principles are necessarily external to the world of everyday experience, waiting out there to be discovered by detached and dispassionate philosophers. In fact, it seems to me, the everyday world is a moral world, and we would do better to study its internal rules, maxims, conventions, and ideals, rather than to detach ourselves from it in search of a universal and transcendent standpoint. [Michael Walzer as quoted in Fassin 2010, 39]

Hope, a baboon in Namibia spent months of her adult life chained, beaten, burned and starved. No one knows why she was abused or who did it, but her cries and screams were finally heard by the team at N’aanku Se Sanctuary. They brought her to the clinic. Her toes were melted into each other, her muscles were atrophied and worst of all, her mouth was rotten from all the food she attempted to store out of fear of starvation. She obviously carried trauma. She would not let any human near her. She isolated herself and screamed in her sleep. Her body healed in a few months, but her psychological scars remained for much longer.
It took the sanctuary team a year to get her to feel safe. They showered her with treats every thirty minutes to assure her that she would no longer be deprived. They spent time with her, talked to her calmly and eventually pet her and played with her when she let them. When Hope was both mentally and physically stronger, the team released her from her new captivity. A year after her release, Hope willingly came back to the sanctuary, this time pregnant. She gave birth on site and left her child on the premise. She would go out to forage and hunt, and then come back for her child. Hope trusted the humans in the sanctuary and knew her baby would be safe with them. She made that decision out of a trusting relationship she had with the team at the sanctuary. Hope made a choice, and that choice was based on a built cross-species relationship. What would a world look like if such trust that can be built and maintained across species were the norm?

_In this world….._

Instead of large asphalt roads, we move through paths. The paths do not cut through but go around and within. The goal is not to separate humans from non-humans but to mediate between them. We are all sharing this land. Animots and plants are not sources of pleasure and serenity when we need them after work (going to the beach, or a hike, or spending time with pets), but they are companions and partners that, like humans, are sometimes inconvenient, annoying or simply unwanted; nevertheless, we have to figure

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40 This idea of paths is inspired by Wendell Berry’s “A Native Hill” where he argues for a more intentional building of relationship with land and acknowledgement of its history and agency.
out a way to coexist with them because getting rid of them, in this world, is not an option. We do not kill starving children and we do not kill starving horses.

The public and private are reimagined. There is still the “private” that is indicated by walls that humans can live within, away from the gaze of others, but such walls do not constitute the end of the natural world or a fixed, rigid barrier between humans and the rest of the world. Plants grow freely, when they reach a wall, they go around it or within it, that is okay. Walls do not stop the animots either. In classrooms full of children learning about math, science and inclusive history, a cat walks in and sits by her favorite student. Each student also has their favorite animot friend. There is jealousy, love and break ups. Animots are not a distraction in the classroom because they are always around, nothing special.

Communication between humans and non-humans is not primarily about words. You learn to understand those non-human friends and enemies through interacting and spending time with them. You get to know the plants and animots in your area. You become familiar with their preferences and personalities. You learn to recognize their triggers. Some of them are nice, some of them are mean. You distinguish one from another and build different relationships with each. Members of the community...humans, animots,

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41 I do not go here into details about what that non-verbal communication might look like. If this is of interest to you, I suggest reading “Toward a Privileging of the Nonverbal” from Experiencing Animal Minds: An Anthology of Human-Animal Encounters (Smith et.al, 2012). Another suggested reading is “Co-being and intra-action in horse–human relationships: a multi-species ethnography of be(com)ing human and be(com)ing horse.” (Maurstad & Cowles, 2013).
plants...sometimes become a problem. They hurt others or refuse to collaborate. How do we deal with them? We rehabilitate them like Hope. We work with them on their fears and build their trust for their community.

Our walls do not extend to the animots, either. We have our houses and they have theirs. We do not build shelters or stables or dog houses. If an animot does want to spend a day/night within our walls, they can find their favorite human and go home with them. This is what happened with Kitty.

*Image 11:* Kitty on my bed on one of the nights she decided to spend indoors with me. 42

I met Kitty at the N’aanku Se Sanctuary. She is a wild cat who every now and then came to my door and entered my room when she needed warmth or love. Animots can make choices and they have preferences. In this new world, we would respect that. We do not know what is better for them.

There are emotions, traditions and histories that bind us together. There is no coercion. The animots, plants and humans in the area have been there for generations upon generations. A new plant, litter and child can enter the world simultaneously and grow side by side. They interact and grow together,

42 Image source: my photography.
they understand each other, respect each other and sometimes even help each other. When the animots are too lazy to hunt, they go to the humans for easy food. When the humans need some fruit transported to the market, they offer treats to the horses in exchange for their help. The horse receives the human’s harness, carries the fruits back and forth, takes the treats and then is done with the day’s work. The horse goes back to her house, family and other relationships. Maybe she develops a strong relationship with one human and visits her every morning to see if she needs help. If the relationship is no longer satisfying, she could choose to stop paying her visits. The human can reflect on why animots never come to her, she can make necessary changes to accommodate them or simply accept that some animots just do not like humans. This already happens, I have seen it.

There are wild horses in Namibia. They roam the desert in packs. The N’aanku Se sanctuary did not have horse stables, but they did sometimes rely on horses for transportation or wildlife tracking. Instead of coercing the horses to give their labor, they created conditions that horses would find appealing. Every morning, a group of people would go out to invite the horses in with a loud sound. The horses knew what those sounds meant: free food and physical care in return for a few hours of labor. The horses would decide to enter the human’s private space to take advantage of their services. The human would pet the horses, feed them, clean them, work on getting them accustomed to the human touch, and eventually ride them. Then, the horses would get millet (a great treat) and then be left alone. Some days, the horses would leave after
their work, while other times they stayed to take advantage of the safety from predators within human walls. Horses did not always comply or accept the humans. One horse, with long brown hair and glossy coat, refused to be around humans or give them labor. She entered the human's private space once but then refused to do it again. I would see her separating from the pack as they entered through the gates and then reuniting with them after they were done with work. She preferred to be alone in the wild rather than close to humans...I wonder what her story is. Is there a way to make her more comfortable? A model of relationships that acknowledges animal choices, preferences and consent is already working in places around the world today, this reimagination is not far-fetched.

In this world, the best care would come from within the multi-species community and its ethical script. The closer you are to animots, the more likely it is for you to know how to care for them. An outsider who does not understand the history, lineage, habits, and traditions that animots and humans share in their context, would not be able to contribute with effective care.

**Checklist Criteria**

To prepare me for life after Wesleyan, as both an animal rights activist and an anthropologist, I end this thesis with a checklist to guide me in the future in assessing animal care projects. The criteria I chose to focus on are potential indicators that such projects realize their embeddedness in power, and are eager to challenge inequitable socio-political relations, the history of
humanitarianism and seemingly neutral—yet not really—terms like compassion, and care. What can “as good as possible” care, that considers both the human and the animal, look like in our world today?

- There is a clear desire on the part of the caregivers to learn about the local animals, humans and their context. The knowledge of the locals is therefore taken seriously and incorporated into the project.

- Root causes, which are learnt from discussions with locals, are at the least acknowledged and at the most tackled. There is a balance between compassion for personal moral gratification and confrontational activism for justice for the members of the community.

- Donations for the facility are fundraised both locally and internationally. There is investment in the project by people within the country.

- Education programs are developed, run and facilitated by people from the community and the curriculum is context specific.

- Foreign volunteers are given training to bring their attention to power dynamics and racial dynamics that they might not be aware of and to solidify their position as one of a student and learner, not expert.

- The project does not claim neutrality but rather takes clear sides in situations of injustice. When taking sides is not possible, as it sometimes is not, they are at least aware of why they can’t and recognize it as a shortcoming.

- There are members of the community working on the projects. They are paid fairly, their voices are heard and their feedback is sought after.

- Animals are seen as individuals and members of the local community who have agency within their social contracts. Their individual lives matter; euthanasia is decided on after ample discussion. It is not the default solution to suffering.
There is an acknowledgement of the lack of purity in interspecies relations. Like human-human relationships, there might be love, hate, annoyance, appreciation and anger at different points in time. Animals are not automatically seen as victims.

Maintaining the relationship between the animals and the humans they spend the most time with is the priority; the separation of animals from their current environment and their human family is the last resort.

This thesis has shown that within the impure practices of care that seldom do only “good,” there is a need for introspection and a reimagination of the “self” and “other.” Care projects will, and should, continue to operate and be supported. However, we need to hold care projects accountable as to not propagate the historical distrust in local “savages” and cement the narrative of a white (wo)man’s burden: the Global North saving the animals of the Global South.

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43 I am thinking here specifically of Donna Haraway’s idea of “significant otherness” in which she argues for a more porous sense of self and other which allows for connections between seemingly different beings. She says, “How can people rooted in different knowledge practices ‘get on together,’ especially when an all-too-easy cultural relativism is not an option, either politically, epistemologically, or morally? How can general knowledge be nurtured in postcolonial worlds committed to taking difference seriously? Answers to these questions can only be put together in emergent practices; i.e., in vulnerable, on-the-ground work that cobbles together non-harmonious agencies and ways of living that are accountable both to their disparate inherited histories and to their barely possible but absolutely necessary joint future. For me, that is what significant otherness signifies” (Haraway 2003, 7).
Nevertheless, in not marking off the ethical as a separate or partial domain but as intrinsic to the ways in which lives make their way through, against, and with others, an ethics of the rough ground is one that is not a moral perfectionism but is grounded in the ambiguous, complex, and vacillating inclinations of life toward the lives of others.

[Al-Mohammed 2015, 114]
My Guiding Sources


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