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**Of Zoogrammatology as a Positive Literary Theory
(Abstract)**

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It is well-known by now that Derrida's book *Of Grammatology* turned out to bear an ironic title, insofar as it develops very little what a grammatology could be. Rather than inaugurating the science of this arche-writing, Derrida concludes that such a thing would be impossible, for a variety of reasons. I'm interested, however, in the consequences of arche-writing for both animals and literature. A careful reading of Derrida can demonstrate that he has always been a patient thinker of the status of animality even before his more openly ›animalist‹ late texts. Derrida himself states in his lecture »But as for me, who am I (following)?« that ›the theme of the animality of writing‹ had always been one of his main concerns (cf. Derrida 2008). Therefore, can the animality of writing make possible a Derridean thinking of the animal alongside that of writing? Or, in other words, can his work on arche-writing be read as a thesis of an arche-animality? If writing as a technique of embodiment reverberates with animalised meaning, what would a literary theory look like that focused on the arche-animality that makes possible the bodily signs of texts? A literary theory attentive to the animality of writing could no longer determine that only some texts are zoopoetic – animality would be a condition of textuality. But, on the other hand, a radical thinking of the animality of writing beyond the metaphysics of body and soul threatens to turn signs into mere things, representing nothing. My main argument is that most of what has come to be known as Literary Animal Studies performs in its methods precisely the opposite of what it aims to do with its object. And this enmeshing of method and object is precisely what I argue that an animalistic theory of literature provides. I hope to show that a dismissal of literary form is itself a speciesist procedure. But more than that, and as some sort of proof, I shall argue that we inherit signification itself – that is, the push into ›reality‹ effected by form – from animality, to the extent that to overlook the procedure of signification is to miss what it means to be an animal, either diminishing it to a Thing, or neutralising the very discourse of species that produces the difference between ›the human‹ and ›the animal‹. I start with a review of an array of position papers by literary scholars defining what they see as Literary Animal Studies, highlighting where I believe they fall short and where they point towards an animalistic understanding of signification. Following that, I offer my approach to Literary Animal Studies by grounding it on a theoretical discussion of the interrelatedness of textuality and animality – which results in what I name a zoogrammatology. Beyond that, however, I suggest that zoogrammatology might be in fact impossible, an impossibility that I hope demonstrates how complex the issue of animality can be for literary scholars and philosophers. The productive critical struggle resulting from zoogrammatology is then briefly illustrated with a reading of Ted Hughes' *The Thought-Fox* which focuses on the graphemic technique employed by the poem to mimic a fox's footprints, with consequences to the poetic project of representing animality.

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