

## Worlding Sanctuary: Multispecies design ethnography on a farm animal sanctuary in Aotearoa

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### Abstract

*Farm animal sanctuaries represent shared life-worlds between the human and nonhuman animal inhabitants. With a focus on the co-creation of sanctuary spaces and practices as acts of worlding and world-building, this paper presents a case study of the challenges and opportunities that arise when combining ethnography and creative practice. Beginning with a cultural analysis of farm sanctuary memoirs, I situate my local project within global narratives. Then, I describe my short-term ethnographic fieldwork experience and its relation to my creative practice. The final section of this article outlines the beginning of my shift from ethnographic inquiry into speculative narrative and provides an example of my creative work. Comparing and contrasting this with the anthropological literature on animal sanctuaries, I argue that a purposeful entanglement of multispecies ethnography and speculative narrative offers a unique way not just to understand multispecies relations but also to imagine new life-worlds.*

### Key words

Multispecies ethnography; farm animal sanctuary; design ethnography; speculative design; memoir.

### Introduction

As spaces where formerly farmed animals are housed and taken under the sanctuaries' care, the farm animal sanctuary movement can be seen as a response to the mass production and consumption of animal life. They are intentional spaces with distinct values and practices that challenge those of industrial livestock farming. The word 'sanctuary' initially denoted a sacred space and has come to encapsulate the concepts of safety and immunity. The word is now commonly associated with specific shelters for animals to inhabit (Fusari, 2017).

In this article, formerly farmed animals within sanctuaries are defined as farmed animal species. This differentiates the formerly farmed animals from wild animals that are farmed. Farmed animal species represent a "social tie constructed over the ten-thousand-year history that humans have shared with domestic animals" (Porcher, 2006, p.57). This category of nonhuman animals is tied to the domination of animal husbandry or livestock farming. Farmed animals are part of production processes within livestock agriculture. Formerly farmed animals are those that are rehomed within sanctuaries.

As part of a larger study, my doctoral thesis centres on the shared life-worlds of farm animal sanctuaries. This paper explores the creative multispecies ethnographic enquiry into what it means to create a sanctuary. I investigate farm animal sanctuaries as shared life-worlds between human and nonhuman animals. Through an in-depth understanding of how the values of farm animal sanctuaries are put into practice, I argue that these spaces exemplify acts of worlding and world-building. ‘Worlding’ comes from the writings of Donna Haraway and refers to the enacting and making of worlds. As a lived ethos, worlding is a process that prioritises the worlds of nonhumans – animals, plants, places, waterways, and skies (Taylor et al., 2013). Worlding focuses on how worlds are brought into being by considering the world as an active subject, and through an emphasis on “becoming with” other creatures within multispecies assemblages (Haraway, 2016, p.3). World-building describes the process of constructing a complete world that serves as context for a story (Zaidi, 2019). World-building refers to the ways worlds are built through various elements: narrative, storytelling, mapping, visuals, and text.

My research builds on literature from posthumanism, critical animal studies (Wilkie, 2015), world-building theory and practice (Le Guin, 2017; Zaidi, 2019), entanglement theory (Fensham & Heller-Nicholas, 2018; Strathern, 2020; Suchman, 2012), multispecies ethnography (Hamilton & Taylor, 2017; Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010; Kohn, 2007) – and equally from critical design research and speculative design (Blythe, 2014; Sterling, 2009). This work is multidisciplinary in nature and brings in diverse fields of inquiry to tell alternative narratives about farm animal sanctuaries. This is part of the commitment of critical animal studies to the freedom and well-being of nonhuman animals.

Critical design research is distinguished from pure design practice due to its systematic and reflective approach in terms of the interpretations and reinterpretations the designer-researcher enacts. The beginning of this process is documented in the final section of this paper. This section outlines the process by which I shifted from ethnographic inquiry into creative practice, specifically, into creative writing prompts and drawing exercises informed by my time at an Aotearoa-based farm animal sanctuary.

As a designer, I have also found it important to establish the visual boundaries of the worlds I begin to build. This began with sketching and mapping activities during my fieldwork. Straying from traditional ethnography and memoirs, creative practice offers unique possibilities for understanding and applying ethnographic narratives. I conducted my research through design (Hook, 2019) and implemented sketching and visual mapping to explore new worlds. I focused on the ability of design to be applied in re-worlding sanctuary-worlds. The illustrations towards the end of this paper exemplify my visual practice.

My interest in the worlds of farmed animals is unexpected, considering my upbringing in a densely populated peninsula on the tip of Spain. The only farmed animals I saw were spotted out of the car window on drives through the Spanish countryside. However, farmed animals were present through the food I consumed up until my teenage years. Farmed animals are also featured in the stories I read and in the video games I played. Over time, I began to consider the lives and deaths of farmed animals critically. When deciding on a research topic for my PhD, I considered spaces where human and nonhuman animals purposely live together. As my master's research included ethnographic research at a free-range pig farm, I knew that I wanted to keep my focus on farmed animals. I have been a vegetarian for much of my life, but eventually realised that in order for my actions to be in line with my ethics, I would have to forgo animal products entirely, becoming vegan. This paper uses the definition of veganism from The Vegan Society (2018) as “a way of living which seeks to exclude, as far as is possible and practicable, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any

other purpose”. Understanding that veganism would ideally retire all farmed animals from the livestock agricultural production process led to my interest in farm animal sanctuaries as purposeful sites for living with and caring for formerly farmed animals.

Having chosen to focus on farm animal sanctuaries as sites which are ethically and politically opposed to the industrial livestock agricultural system also locates my research within Critical Animal Studies, a recent field of activist scholarship that explicitly commits to the freedom and well-being of nonhuman animals (Best, 2009). By bringing together anthropological inquiry, critical animal studies, and creative practice, I aim to imagine new shared worlds for human and nonhuman animals within the framework of multispecies justice (Kopnina, 2017).

As part of a larger study, my project is situated in a small part of contemporary Aotearoa, New Zealand, Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington. The colony was originally sold to settlers as a sanctuary from the struggles of their former lives in the United Kingdom (Boswell, 2017). However, seeking refuge in this ‘new’ land, and one of the planet’s last ‘new worlds’, resulted in the exteriorising and expulsion of local Indigenous peoples and knowledge. Refuge for some was always persecution for others. As a contemporary settler from Gibraltar, my attempt to understand farm animal sanctuaries under conditions of white settler colonialism is present throughout my research.

When speaking about sanctuaries in Aotearoa New Zealand, I have often encountered the presumption that I would be studying wildlife sanctuaries. Aotearoa New Zealand hosts a remarkable number of endemic species and a pronounced desire to shelter the local wildlife from ‘invasive species’ – a topic rich enough for several doctoral projects. Aotearoa New Zealand has a high number of endemic species and many wildlife sanctuaries. Refuge for wild animals has led to introduced species being labelled “animal pests”, “invasive species”, and “unwanted organisms” (Boswell, 2017, p.124). Boswell (2017) presents a study of the exceptionalism of wildlife sanctuaries within Aotearoa New Zealand, and states that “[i]t is clear that in settler colonial places, where the world of life is subject to ongoing re-engineering, sanctuary is presently taken to legitimise the persecution of animals who are framed as persecutors by the operation of settler sanctuary-making itself” (p.129). Whilst I remain interested in farm animal sanctuaries, which are relatively rare here, my research is situated within this wider discourse of human-animal relations in Aotearoa New Zealand.

As I always understood my project to be imaginative as well as ethnographic, I immediately faced limited fieldwork opportunities. Conducting my PhD during a global pandemic further limited my options and restricted my fieldwork to living and labouring at a single sanctuary for one week. Although short-term fieldwork is common in design anthropology and industry-based ethnography (Pink & Morgan, 2013; Sperschneider & Bagger, 2010), I understood that my narrative research and creative practice would necessarily expand and stretch more conservative understandings of the discipline and expectations of fieldwork. As an activist design researcher, I sought to build on the knowledge of worlds we already share with farmed animals to imagine new ways of living well with them.

Sanctuary-worlds serve as examples of concrete acts of worlding and world-building through a combination of their practices and value expressions. I consider how both worlding and world-building are valuable in opening up or holding space (Bailey, 2013; Escobar, 2020) to rethink and imagine multispecies worlds (Westerlaken, 2020). To understand the combined worlding and world-building of farm animal sanctuaries, I investigated what it means to live and work in a sanctuary by reading sanctuary memoirs and ethnography and conducting fieldwork. In turn, this first and second-hand lived experience has been instrumental in shaping

my research's final, practice-based stage. The beginning of this phase is represented by the creative writing and drawing exercises presented towards the end of this paper.

This article focuses on where these world-building and worlding elements meet and the narratives that emerge from their connections. Specifically, I present my approach to investigating farm animal sanctuaries in conversation with Elan Abrell's, *Saving Animals: Multispecies Ecologies of Rescue and Care* (2021). Abrell's work was published during the second year of my doctoral studies and represented the most extensive ethnographic research published to date about the sanctuary movement.

### Sanctuary narratives: Reading memoirs/reading ethnography

I initially trained my attention on sanctuary memoirs due to a gap in the academic literature on the everyday embodied experiences of farm animal sanctuary life. I wanted to learn about the values and practices driving farm animal sanctuaries and the ways in which the memoirs 'built' these sanctuary-worlds, and ultimately conducted a thematic narrative analysis (Flick, 2014; Wells, 2011) of farm sanctuary memoirs that would familiarise me with the movement before doing fieldwork. O'Connor (2011) defines memoir as "an honest rendering of the writer's experience with a readable story" (p.xxv). The memoir "is made from selection, from shaping, from knowing how to distinguish the quick of one's life from what is dead" (Pinsker, 2003, p.213). In this way, it is like any other textual art form intended for an audience. The author chooses moments and experiences from their lives and presents them in a convincing or engaging way for the reader. Farm animal sanctuary owners write farm animal sanctuary memoirs and allow glimpses into the first-hand experiences of sanctuary owners as people who live and work with farmed animals daily.

Not only did the farm animal sanctuary movement originate in the United States (US) (Baur, 2008), but most written narratives still focus on the North American context. Farm sanctuaries are a very recent phenomenon in Aotearoa New Zealand, and whilst this makes direct comparison with this context difficult, reading these memoirs proved to be the most direct and feasible way of initially understanding sanctuary life and work.

For this analysis, I read one sanctuary memoir based in Aotearoa New Zealand (Jones & Bishop, 2014) and seven based in the US (Baur, 2008; Bishop, 2014; Brown, 2012; Jenkins & Walter, 2018; Laks, 2014; Marohn, 2012; Stevens, 2009; Zaleski, 2021). These were the only sanctuary memoirs I could locate that were written in the English language. I conducted qualitative content analysis, which involved counting the number of times certain themes or events were told within each memoir (Flick, 2014). I noted how they described their ideals and missions and the ways they positioned themselves against the livestock agricultural system. There was a shared focus on the rigorous aspect of daily physical and manual labour in maintaining the sanctuary grounds and care of the animals. However, the sanctuary owners also presented a specific image of sanctuary life for its human and nonhuman residents, with themes of safety and sanctuary, friendship with animals, veganism and animal rights advocacy, and shared freedom and liberation through rural idylls.

These themes generated from my content analysis of sanctuary memoirs led to my initial impression of sanctuaries as sites of high ideals and strong opinions. The lives of the nonhuman animals and the perceived harms done by industrial farming were consistent and central to the narrative told by these sanctuaries. Sanctuary memoirs tended to end by urging readers to change their lifestyle and go vegan, or with personal musings around the 'problem' of industrial livestock farming. These understandings resonated with my own ethics and politics, as well as with the goals of an activist anthropology.

Through my reading of sanctuary memoirs, I began to see how the material and symbolic elements of sanctuaries demonstrate the worlds they want to build, and reflected on how this could inform us about how to change human-animal relationships. In *Saving Animals*, Abrell (2021) bridges anthropology and animal studies – providing the first substantial ethnographic monograph on the sanctuary movement and my primary touchpoint in the anthropological literature.

Abrell's book presents a comparative analysis of two years of fieldwork at a 'no kill' dog and cat shelter in Texas, an exotic animal sanctuary in Hawai'i, a farm animal sanctuary in New York, and supplementary visits to other rescue facilities across the US. His research included a combination of long-term participant observation and in-depth interviews on rescue and care practices at the sanctuaries, as well as the ethical values that inform them. Abrell then "documented how caregivers structure the living spaces of animals; meet their daily nutritional needs; respond to illness and injuries; and address aggressive, destructive, or uncooperative behaviour" (2021, p.12).

Through reading Abrell's book, I could see the results of long-term ethnography at animal sanctuaries. Being unable to conduct this kind of fieldwork meant that my own approach and findings were notably different from Abrell's. He thoroughly investigated his questions surrounding the motivations for sanctuary owners and workers to conduct a certain kind of care for sanctuary animals. My initial research question (i.e. what can farm animal sanctuary values and practices teach us about imagining new worlds for farmed animals?) centres on imagining new worlds for human and nonhuman animals, presenting a departure from Abrell. Whilst Abrell's research is in keeping with anthropological literary traditions, mine goes beyond anthropology to combine ethnography with creative practice and speculation for new sanctuary-worlds. Nevertheless, reading *Saving Animals* was invaluable in demonstrating what an extensive ethnography of animal sanctuaries can do in presenting the sanctuary movement and the values and practices this entails. It also helped root my work within global narratives.

Ethnographic narratives supplement the description of lived experience with ethnographic analysis. Reflexive analytical work organises and reorganises the findings from fieldwork and interviews to generate themes and concepts that have explanatory and descriptive value (Coffey, 2018). On the other hand, memoirs fall under the autobiographical genre. Whilst both narrative formats entail some degree of storytelling, a tradition of analytical research methods characterises the ethnographic approach, and the memoir is a form of autobiographical creative nonfiction that may be seen to share more with auto-ethnography (Chang, 2016; Holman et al., 2016).

However, both sanctuary memoirs and ethnographic narratives present versions and visions of sanctuary-worlds. Sanctuary memoirs are written by the owners who work and live within the sanctuaries day-to-day. They depict the sanctuary's goals, values, and somewhat idealised versions of sanctuary living. Ethnographic narratives are written from an outsider's perspective on the sanctuary-world. The values and practices are observed and interpreted through the lens of analytical research traditions. My work is aligned more closely with that of Abrell's than with the memoirs as I approach sanctuary-worlds as an outsider looking to understand the embodied values and practices of sanctuary life.

### Doing fieldwork/creating narratives

As part of my thesis project, I organised a fieldwork-stay with one sanctuary in Aotearoa New Zealand, enabling me to compare and contrast my findings with Abrell's and with the themes identified in the sanctuary memoirs. As elaborated on later in the article, these themes include

rural idyll, freedom, and liberation of farmed animals and ‘necro-care’. ‘Necro-care’ refers to the killing of certain animals to care for the sanctuary residents, as well as deciding when the animals are too unhealthy to continue living. Situating myself in the actual worlds and relations of a sanctuary uncovered tensions with the ways sanctuary-worlds are presented.

The narrative world-building of sanctuary memoirs and the ways sanctuaries are presented to the public are challenged by the actual worldings between human and nonhuman animals in these spaces. Through our fieldwork, Abrell and I addressed how the worlding of sanctuaries contrasts with the building of idealised sanctuary-worlds. For example, the difficult labour of sanctuary work belies their sometimes utopian descriptions within memoirs and as depicted through the social media accounts of farm animal sanctuaries. I noted that my conception of a farm animal sanctuary as an idealised site of verdant fields where nonhuman animals live freely was over-simplified. Prior to visiting the sanctuary, my main mode of observing sanctuary life was through sanctuary memoirs and the social media sites of farm animal sanctuaries. After spending time at the sanctuary, as documented below, I realised what it actually means to carve out space for sanctuary in a world where the dominant mode of living and worlding with farmed animals happens within livestock agricultural systems.

I had initial telephone conversations with the sanctuary owner to arrange fieldwork. I spent one week on a private farm animal sanctuary in Aotearoa New Zealand. I worked there in a kind of volunteer capacity, conducting participant observation by embedding myself in the routines and work of the sanctuary owner, Rachel (a pseudonym). I conducted one in-depth interview (Weiss, 1995) with Rachel, as well as many informal discussions and conversations about what it means to run a sanctuary and the challenges therein. I had prepared myself for the physical labour of sanctuary work and was able to see first-hand the emotional labour involved.

Challenges surrounding financial stresses, lack of volunteer workers, and online and offline disagreements surprised me. Having read about larger operations in the US, the sanctuary I stayed at was located on a 15-acre small-hold of hill paddocks and housed three humans (the owner, a volunteer and a border) as well as ten dogs (*canis lupus familiaris*), six cows (*bos taurus*), twenty-one chickens (*gallus gallus domesticus*), two donkeys (*equus asinus*), two miniature horses (*equus caballus*), four ducks (*anatidae*), two cats (*felis catus*), and four Kunekune pigs (*sus scrofa domesticus*). Our days were spent waking up early to feed all of the animals and provide their medical care, doing various odd jobs during the day, and another round of feeding and animal care in the evenings. Then we, the humans, sat down to dinner before going to bed early.

During my stay at the sanctuary, I conducted multispecies ethnography (Galloway, 2020; Kirksey & Helmreich, 2010) to understand how the human and nonhuman residents worlded the space, and I aimed to privilege the perspective of nonhuman animals during my fieldwork (Hamilton & Taylor, 2017). This meant that I could not solely rely on participant observation and interviews as these are based on human-human interactions. My research question provokes thought around new worlds for multispecies justice; in order to imagine these worlds from a less human-centric perspective, it was important for me to engage with the field site from a multispecies perspective.

I paid attention to the sensory experience (Pink, 2015) of the sanctuary, and took smell and sound walks (Hamilton & Taylor, 2017) as I navigated the field site. I slowed down and listened to the sounds of the animals and the noises characterising the atmosphere. The senses of touch, smell and sound are central to the ways animals experience the world. By conducting sensory ethnography, I privileged these senses to get closer to the animals’ worlds. I spent time out with the nonhuman animals, sitting silently and observing them, as well as interacting with

them occasionally (if and when they approached me). At the end of each day, I wrote journal entries documenting every event and interaction that I could recall. I also recorded the sounds of the nonhuman animals as they traversed the paddocks, snuffling the ground and tearing the grass. I took photographs of the animals that inspired some of the sketches presented at the end of this article as part of the creative design work. Through multispecies methods, I aimed to address the over-reliance on human narratives in sanctuary ethnographies and the anthropomorphising consistent in sanctuary memoirs.

As we arrived at the sanctuary in Rachel's truck, we crested the hill, and rolling green paddocks came into view, with cows and donkeys dotting the landscape. I was presented with the kind of rural idyll (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2015) that is prevalent in sanctuary memoirs. The image of a verdant, bucolic landscape was consistent across the memoirs and indicated the types of worlds the sanctuary owners sought to 'build'. Sanctuaries present themselves as a kind of refuge or haven for the residents and frame the sanctuary as a safe space in opposition to livestock agriculture. This idyllic imagery starkly contrasted the perception of farming as harmful and dangerous—although the sanctuary did not immediately appear different from surrounding farms.

Images of rural idyll or of a utopian sanctuary-world do not adequately represent the "mundanity of care" (Abrell, 2021, p.12) in this kind of work. During my stay at the sanctuary, much of my time was spent feeding the animals or cleaning up their faeces. Many of the animals needed daily medical care and treatments, and concern for their health was constant throughout each day at the field site. This key feature in the active worlding of the space between the human and nonhuman animals was always animal-centred: noting where each animal was throughout the day, syncing mealtimes and times of rest. Sanctuary owner Rachel talked about the "stressful" work of running a sanctuary and the "long hours", as well as feeling "absolutely exhausted" by the emotional and physical labour. This real, "hard work" of animal care is not encapsulated in an idealised representation of sanctuary-worlds.

Another feature of the 'ideal' sanctuary-world is exemplified through their participation in the animal rights movement, or worlding without exploitation. Animal rights advocacy drives the desire for freedom and liberation for animals from the perceived dangers of industrial livestock farming. Rachel often talked of the sanctuary animals being "free" from their former status as farm animals and that they could now live "happy" and "comfortable" lives on the sanctuary. Under current socio-political conditions, which see the dominant mode of worlding with farmed animals through livestock agricultural systems, it is difficult for me to conceive of formerly farmed animals within sanctuaries as entirely free. Formerly farmed animals still exist as domesticated animals and are subject to unwanted medical treatments and human routines. The hierarchy of human-animal power relations is still at play within farm animal sanctuaries. Ultimately, the sanctuary owners and workers are in control of nonhuman animal life and death on a sanctuary, as evidenced in the below paragraphs on 'necro-care'.

The common ideals of freedom and liberation often result in further tensions between sanctuary-worlds and farm-worlds. Rachel spoke at length about her participation in animal rights advocacy, explaining that her personal adherence to animal rights advocacy often strained sanctuary relationships with neighbouring farmers. Rachel contrasted her "love" for her own animals with the "harm" she perceived farmers inflicting on their animals. Despite their frequent physical proximity, sanctuary-worlds exist in direct opposition to farm-worlds, a relation which becomes especially complicated. Abrell notes that a future of free and liberated farmed animals "may never be attainable" under the specific political and social conditions of modern human-animal relations (Abrell, 2021, p.178). Rachel built the world of the sanctuary with the foregrounding ideals of love and safety for nonhuman animals. The worlding that

happened within the sanctuary troubled these ideals; the necessity of killing nonhuman animals represents the complexity of worlding with other animals and the pervasive human-animal power hierarchies.

Abrell writes about the complexity of saving animals, or providing them “freedom and liberation”, whilst actively employing death to foster life (2021, p.151). Rachel told anecdotes about the balance of life and death on the sanctuary (and about old or sick animals that were killed and buried in the sanctuary “cemetery”). One of these anecdotes, in which a wild pig was killed to protect the sanctuary residents, reflects this problem of sanctuary life. Rachel spoke about employing a hunter to shoot the pig and that she watched the entire time to ensure that the hunter was meeting her standards for what constituted a ‘better’ death for the pigs. Rachel noted the challenge of striving for a world where animals are “happy” and “free”, whilst participating in the act of killing to enable that world. Killing animals aligns sanctuary practices with some of the perceived harms enacted by livestock farming. This introduces a commonality with farming that raises tensions with the ideals of sanctuary-worlds and their association with animal rights advocacy.

During my fieldwork, I combined multispecies ethnography and design ethnography through sketching and mapping (Reason, 2004) to understand the life-worlds of sanctuary, marking the beginning of the creative work for the rest of my thesis. Worlding was evident in the ways the human and nonhuman residents were active agents in co-creating the sanctuary-space. World-building was encapsulated in how sanctuary-worlds are described by sanctuary owners and in their strong ideals and complex relations.

The next phase of my research recognises and builds on the limitations of the lived ideals, but argues that narrative ideals embodied in creative work can still add valuable, radical imaginings of new sanctuary-worlds according to multispecies justice. The goals of sanctuary-worlds are utopian because their ideals of freedom and liberation may never reach full realisation, but “efforts to reach that future are an insistence that another world is possible” (Abrell, 2021, p.178). I begin to reimagine these possible worlds by entangling multispecies ethnography and creative research.

## **From experience to imagination: World-building for re-worlding**

Subsequent to fieldwork, I worked through the creative phase of my research project, shifting my focus from ethnographic to speculative narrative. My approach to creative narrative was informed by speculative design, which permits space for discussion about “alternate ways of being” (Dunne & Raby, 2013, p.2). Building on the discursive design tradition, I used speculative narrative and visuals as “goods that are good for thinking” (Tharp & Tharp, 2018, p.8). My creative work provides anthropology with an example of how to combine creative research with ethnography (Elliott & Culhane, 2017; Hjorth et al., 2020; Pandian, 2017; Tedlock, 2011).

This phase of my research was informed by the idea of ‘natureculture’ (Haraway, 2003). This term asserts that nature and culture are so tightly interwoven that they cannot be separated, consequently undoing the boundaries that separate humans and nature. This way of thinking is informed by Indigenous ontology (Brightman, 1993; Kohn, 2007) and critiques the distinction between human and nonhuman animals. I looked to animal sanctuaries as examples of natureculture worlds because they provide an alternate opportunity for worlding with humans and farmed animals and promise change to industrialised and commodified human-animal relationships.



The tradition and interlinkages of fiction and ethnography have been well-documented. My own creative work was inspired by the ethnographic and creative writings of Ursula K. Le Guin (Le Guin, 1998; Le Guin, 1999). Le Guin's work serves as a compelling precedent for the shared similarities of fiction and ethnography. Ethnographers attempt to "develop a coherent narrative out of multifarious and often indeterminate experiences" (Baker-Cristales, 2012, p.5); similarly, Le Guin uses fictional and fantastic ethnographic narratives to question new possibilities for human existence and utopian imagination (Le Guin, 1985). These involve the creation and telling of imaginary life-worlds to explore socio-political issues through fictional prose.

Taking my cue from Le Guin, my creative phase began with writing prompts (Manhire, Duncum, Price & Wilkins, 2013) that moved me from reality-bound ethnography to imaginative work. The prompts set specific limits on my narratives and allowed me to explore a range of ideas. Building a world sets boundaries in a similar manner to the ways writing prompts set parameters, as each response to a prompt serves to build a (small) world. By writing within these worlds, I actively performed the possibility for worlding, or re-worlding, with nonhuman animals according to multispecies justice. The writing prompts were designed to elicit writing examples that explore different ways of telling stories about farmed animals.

One writing prompt that showed significant promise is Dinah Hawken's 'Writing the Landscape' (Hawken, 2013). This prompt asks the writer for a poem or piece of prose in three sections. The first section begins with 'I see', the second with 'I remember', and the third with 'I imagine'. This prompt allowed me to recall past fieldwork at the sanctuary by remembering the field-site in the present, and then projecting these narratives into the future by speculating what new sanctuary-worlds could be like. This prompt offered a concrete methodological framework for moving from fieldwork to imagination, as it allowed me to go from the actual worlding of these spaces to a re-worlding through creative fiction. Below are examples of my creative writing responses to these prompts with associated illustrations. The remainder of the article reflects on these examples and how they signify the shift from ethnography to the imaginary.

***Writing the landscape: Write as if you are at the sanctuary. Write a one-page piece of prose or poem in three sections. The first section should begin with 'I see', the second with 'I remember', and the third with 'I imagine'. At the editing stage, feel free to remove these beginning words.***

*I see hills rolling into the horizon. I see a creek cutting through paddocks lined by fences. As I walk from my room in the sleepout up to the main house, I encounter a number of the animal residents. The first gate opens onto a gravel driveway. I pass the donkeys and miniature horses standing in pairs. The bags of hay hang dripping at the fence, and the horses and donkeys wander up to them from time to time to feast. The second gate opens onto the patch of road between the main house and the pigs' paddock. Ducks and chickens also linger there for most of the day as they share their corn and grain with the kunekune. The pigs are usually sleeping in the shade unless it is time for their two-time daily feed. The sanctuary is an ebb and flow of activity and movement. From afar it appears restful. Living here I know that the days are peppered with the various tasks required for the array of mostly old and some young formerly farmed animals.*



Mañetto Quick, M. (2023). *Two Kunekune pigs* [Watercolour painting].

*I remember the downtime in the afternoons. The sanctuary felt at peace. I would often lie on the bunk bed in my room, writing notes on what I had seen and experienced on that day. This time, in the mid-afternoon, it was hot and languid. The human and nonhuman residents were usually napping. If I looked out of my window, I could spot the trio of cows on the hill opposite. One of the dogs would come and lie with me, taking up much of the bed as I navigated my body so as not to disturb their slumber. The heady smell of dung, earth and animal fur that had previously kept me up on my first night no longer unsettled my senses. I remember feeling relaxed and comfortable once the morning tasks were over, as that meant the most tumultuous time of the day, with the most potential for change or new challenges, was done.*



Mañetto Quick, M. (2023). *Goat in repose* [Watercolour painting].

*I imagine what it would be like if more human and nonhuman animals could experience this type of sanctuary. Could all farm animals retire to a sanctuary? Or could farm animals live more like this even when they are actively part of the livestock agricultural system? I try to picture a world where slow care of farm animals is prioritised. Why can't a farm also be considered a sanctuary? I think about a world where we get used to seeing old and infirm farm animals. Perhaps the care of these animals could be distributed throughout society more equally so that we have more opportunities to live side-by-side with nonhuman animals. Or humans could take a step back and interfere less with the lives of formerly farmed animals. A*

*lot of these thoughts are half-formed. To me, they start to reveal the promise of imagining new ways of seeing farmed animals and new ways for them and us to live.*



Mañetto Quick, M. (2023). *Sheep overlooking hills* [Watercolour painting].

*I see three cows through the fence. I am at the bottom of one of the steepest paddocks. This is my first time visiting any of the cows. They are bigger than I thought they would be, having only seen them from a distance. The friendliest of the three comes towards me and licks my hand through the fence. Her tongue feels like a cat's tongue, except that it is much bigger and more powerful. The surface of her tongue is surprisingly rough. The other two cows watch me but keep their distance. I take a few photos of the trio before heading back up the paddock towards the house.*



Mañetto Quick, M. (2023). *Two cows* [Watercolour painting].

*I remember that, whilst I was down on that paddock, I saw a herd of cattle on a neighbouring hill. I assumed these were dairy cows on a nearby farm. I thought about the proximity between the sanctuary cows and the farm cows. All of their lives would have begun in a similar manner (the sanctuary cows were mostly rescued from dairy farms). Their geographical landscape was almost identical. The dairy cows were still working animals whereas the sanctuary cows were not. There were fences for both types of cows keeping them in some form of captivity. The death of these animals would likely be quite different. Rachel would have these animals killed when she deemed them too unhealthy to live a comfortable life. The dairy cows would be killed in an*

*abattoir when the time was most economically beneficial. For now, they lived on steep adjoining hills and chewed cud side by side.*



Mañetto Quick, M. (2023). *Red barns* [Watercolour painting].

*I imagine what would happen if we removed the fences between the hills. I wonder what the world would be like if we extended our definition and practice of sanctuary. Could all farmed animals be born into sanctuary? Do humans still make sense in this manifestation of sanctuary? The kinship between humans and farmed (or formerly farmed) animals is important in how we currently make worlds, or world, together. Could we make these worlds and allow greater capacity for sanctuary? I wonder what the cows would choose if they could live whatever life they desired. Perhaps the friendliest of the three would find comfort in human companionship whilst the other two could take it or leave it. My knowledge of what goes on inside the mind of a cow is so tentative and speculative that I could never be sure. The idea of animals sanctuaring in the ways they desire is appealing. These cows cocreate the sanctuary with their human carers, but their landscape and lives are still under human control. I imagine how a co-sanctuaried world could look different if we changed the ways cows are born, live and die.*



Mañetto Quick, M. (2023). *Hills with a fence running through* [Watercolour painting].

The responses to the prompts explored my understanding of what it means to make a sanctuary with formerly farmed animals. I asked questions about what it would be like to ‘co-sanctuary’ with other animals and what kinds of freedoms might be possible if we expand the meaning of sanctuary. The writing excerpts drew directly from observations I made whilst conducting ethnographic fieldwork at a sanctuary and enabled me to muse on themes of freedom and

multispecies worlding. The writing and the watercolour images of sanctuary life represent the beginning of the shift to the creative phase of the research. However, the representations of sanctuary-worlds that I conjured in these examples are overly romanticised, and even sanitised, versions of farmed animal life. This reflects the themes of the rural idyll I noted previously. The watercolour imagery adds to the idyllic world-building of sanctuary in these responses. The agency of the nonhuman animals in the worlding of sanctuary should also be foregrounded. The creative writing excerpts were written from my perspective and in first-person. The next iterations could experiment with different viewpoints to centre multispecies world-building, rather than a human-centred perspective. Furthermore, my written responses did not explicitly engage with the complexities inherent in living and dying with farmed animals and with the killing of nonhuman animals that is inevitable in these spaces.

Despite the limitations of this primary step towards imagination, this process indicates an ‘opening up’ or an expansion of the ethnographic fieldwork. The process untethered my thinking from the reality-bound realm of fieldwork and towards speculative imaginings for how we could build worlds differently with farmed animals. The next step in the creative phase was to iteratively progress from these writing and drawing exercises to more accurately present the complexities and tensions of worlding with nonhuman animals, as well as foregrounding more-than-human world-making capacity. Therein lies the potential for speculating worlds where natureculture dichotomies are more wholly unravelled.

My speculative work aimed to re-build sanctuary-worlds by responding to imaginative writing and drawing prompts. In this final phase, I worked through my own transition to practising a new kind of visual and speculative ethnography. Throughout the creative phase of the research, I attempted to “gather up the complexities and keep the edges open and greedy for surprising new and old connections” (Haraway, 2016, p.101) through my shift from theoretical to practical work. My chosen methodologies centre nonhuman animals in imagining how sanctuary-worlds could look and serve as models for new kinds of worlding.

## Conclusion

This paper has presented my experiences combining literary narrative analysis, ethnographic fieldwork, and creative narrative design to understand and re-imagine human relationships with farmed animals. This work offers a unique glimpse at the process of becoming a multispecies design ethnographer. I have learnt that transitioning from an ‘actual’ to a ‘speculative’ narrative is not as simple as it may first seem. Perhaps the boundaries have never been entirely clear-cut, but I noticed that a move from ethnographic methodologies to imaginary practice can begin to expand multispecies life-worlds. The move from embodied experience within reality to the realm of the imaginary can be difficult; I argue that in this challenge lies the possibility of building new worlds and worlding well within these boundaries. How can a purposeful entanglement of analytical and creative practices continue to be combined in anthropological work? What kind of radical, more-than-human worldings could occur if we expanded our life-worlds beyond reality into the imaginary?

## Ethical Approval

This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee #0000029078.

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