

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2012 independent photographer, Hannah Stonehouse, took the following photograph (Figure 1) of her friend John Unger and his dog Schoep in Lake Superior, North America. Schoep, 19 years old in the image, suffered from arthritis and, as a result, Unger would occasionally take his dog into the lake for remedial purposes. On this particular day Unger asked his friend to take some pictures of him and his dog. While she was taking the photos, the dog fell asleep on Unger in the water (captured in Figure 1). Stonehouse shared the image on Facebook and within 24 hours the photo had gone viral. It was viewed more than two million times on the social network and was shared more than 100 000 times (Wolf 2012). The image of a man and his dog touched people from all over the world and sparked conversation and empathy in the virtual environment. In fact, the image had such a profound effect on social media, that three years later, when Stonehouse's husband died in an accident on Lake Superior, thousands of people took to social media to comfort her. Most of them offered condolences by sharing photos of their dogs on her Facebook page. Hudson (in Guthrey 2013) explains: "We all have a bond and a common denominator, and that's loving our animals. That's what is interesting about this group. They rely on their animals for solace, for love, to make them feel not alone ...". What's even more interesting is that these people not only choose to show their affection through their pets, but also by sharing images of these pets on social media.



Figure 1: Viral image of John Unger and his dog Schoep asleep on his chest in Lake Superior. Photograph by Hannah Stonehouse. (Wolf 2012).

Hannah, John and Schoep's story about the capturing and sharing of images of pets, specifically dogs, on social media is not a unique occurrence. In contemporary society millions of people share images of their dogs on various online platforms, to such an extent that online images of dogs have become a global phenomenon, much like the selfie. On Instagram specifically, images of dogs have been labelled dogstagrams (#dogstagram) and form part of a virtual community referred to as Dogs of Instagram (#dogsofinstagram). To date over 69 million dogstagrams have been shared on Instagram, confirming that these images are a popular occurrence.

When I read Stonehouse's viral photo story, scroll through the millions of dogstagrams on Instagram and post about my own dogs on social media, I cannot help but wonder what these images mean in contemporary society? Why specifically images of dogs and why now? How do these images fit in with the theoretical turn towards nonhumanism? And, if part of nonhumanism, do these images represent nonhuman supporter Donna Haraway's notion of becoming with our companion species, or are they simply another form of anthropocentric self-representation? What do dogstagrams reflect and reveal about being human with other species in the Digital Age and the current environmental context?

1.1 The research problem

Based on theorist Donna Haraway's concept of dogs as companion species, this study aims to critically examine the phenomenon of companion species as it manifests on social media by exploring the notion of humans *being-with* and *becoming with* dogs as their nonhuman others. Through her formulation of companion species, Haraway (2003) contends that human-dog relations are the ultimate manifestation of the implosion between nature and culture (or natureculture), resulting in a crucial connection between man and dog – or then humans and nonhumans – that needs to be unpacked and understood, especially within the current context of the Anthropocene.

Haraway's companion species highlights (and perhaps prompts) an important argument prominent in current Anthropocene research regarding species relations and environmental studies: a consideration for multispecies,

nonhuman and interspecies relations, where humans and nonhumans are constantly *becoming with* one another in significant otherness. This so-called turn towards 'nonhumanism' occurs in response to the age-old western human exceptionalism argument, where human beings are seen as the most important entities in the world. Human exceptionalism explorations typically focus on the notion that theorisation of the nonhuman other cannot escape anthropomorphism and the mastery of the ever-present human being.

Working through Haraway's companion species and the nonhuman turn, I consider the relation between Haraway's (2008) *becoming with* and German philosopher Martin Heidegger's (1927) idea of *being (Dasein)* and *being-with (Mitsein)* others. By reading Haraway *with* Heidegger, I argue that nonhumanism is not a rupture from the human condition, but rather an expansion of what it means to be human with others in contemporary society. I show that although nonhumanism typically rejects Heidegger's perceived anthropocentric approach to animals, Haraway's nonhumanist *becoming with* shares and shows similarity to Heidegger's being-with-others. By engaging with both Heidegger and Haraway the study not only opens up a space to consider Heidegger's theory in relation to nonhumanism, but also emphasises the continuing importance of the human within *nonhumanism*. Nonhumanists join the likes of cyberfeminists, posthumanists and biocentrists (amongst others) in the battle against dualistic categories pertaining to human exceptionalism, such as nature versus culture. Although nonhumanism is concerned with overcoming dualistic thought, it is argued that nonhumanism also continues to engage with human qualities and characteristics, such as love, goodness and prosperity. In other words, throughout my exploration of the phenomena of companion species, I maintain the position that in the midst of the nonhuman turn, we remain all too human by *being-with* nonhuman others, specifically in terms of human-dog companionship.

The Anthropocenic divide between human exceptionalism and nonhumanism, as well as the prevalence of the human within nonhumanism, are evident in human-dog relations. In contemporary society this pivotal relationship notably manifests on social media when humans capture and share their relations with

their dogs on various platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. In an added layer to the study, I argue that online images of the human-dog relation reflect and mediate the nature of *being-with* and *becoming with* nonhuman others. Through a digital and theoretical exploration of online companion species, I argue that these images reflect the significance of human qualities within nonhuman relations, as well as what it means to be human with our nonhuman others in the Digital Age. Moreover, by thinking through and digitally analysing social media images of human-dog relations the study provides a platform for a critical reading of the phenomenon of companion species in a digital world, reflecting on Haraway's motion to re-signify companion species in contemporary society. Finally, by critically examining companion species online, as well as theoretically and digitally exploring the notion of *being-with* and *becoming with* dogs on social media, this study adds to an environmental conversation, learning about and from the ways of existing with our dogs.

The theme of *being-with* and *becoming with* companion species is approached through various layers featured throughout the study, including: (1) a theoretical examination of nonhumanism in relation to human exceptionalism, as well as the philosophies of Haraway in relation to those of Heidegger; (2) vignettes narrating my own relations with my dogs Fudge and Cody; (3) applications of various visual examples in relation to theoretical perspectives; (4) a digital analysis of companion species on Instagram; and (5) a theoretical exploration of companion species in the digital realm. By placing these layers in constant dialogue with one another the study provides a predominantly hermeneutic reading of companion species in contemporary society and a critical reading of the nonhuman turn.

1.2 Introduction to the study

1.2.1 Background, context and understanding

To contextualise and commence a critical reading of companion species on social media some critical concepts require unpacking and delimitation. What follows is a brief introduction to the theoretical background, context and understanding of the study. The so-called 'ABCs' of the research situates the exploration within

the context of the Anthropocene; defines important concepts such as *being-with*, *becoming with*, human exceptionalism, nonhumanism, and multispecies relations; and explains what is meant by companion species and *dogstagram*s respectively.

- **A is for Anthropocene**

With the constant prevalence of news stories concerning global warming in the media, there is no doubt that planet earth is facing immense environmental crises. To make matters worse the period to address some of these major anxieties and environmental challenges is tapering (Palsson et al. 2013:3). From a scholarly perspective, multiple geologists, environmentalists, anthropologists and philosophers – amongst others – have all attempted to theorise the global environmental crisis from a wide variety of perspectives.¹ The attempts have resulted in deliberations regarding nature, culture and interactions with other species, as well as an overall critical engagement with the Anthropocene.

First defined by Nobel Prize winner Paul Crutzen and biologist Eugene Stoermer in an IGBP Newsletter in 2000, the term ‘Anthropocene’ is allocated “to the present, in many ways human-dominated, geological epoch, supplementing the Holocene – the warm period of the past 10-12 millennia” (Crutzen 2002:23). The Anthropocene refers to the most recent epoch where human activity has come to change and influence the environment to such an extent that it has altered natural phenomenon, including climate, the biosphere and ecosystems (Crutzen 2002:23). For example, human activity has resulted in extinction of species, polluted oceans altering the oceanic ecosystem and a change in the amalgamation of the atmosphere (Hamilton 2014:1; Braje & Erlandson 2013:116). It is important to note that the Anthropocene is not just “defined by the broadening impact of humans on the environment, but by active human interference in the processes that govern the geological evolution of the planet” (Hamilton 2014:3). That is to say, human forces have not just produced

¹ Artists have also had a significant influence in the exploration of the Anthropocene, both in the form of creative outputs and in their contribution to scholarly projects (Van Dooren et al. 2016:9).

secondary consequences through their actions but have actively infiltrated and interfered with the environment first-hand.

Although the term 'Anthropocene' is currently only applied informally, since it has not been officially acknowledged by the International Union of Geological Sciences, it is still widely used, accepted and discussed. In fact, the use and unpacking of the Anthropocene as a successor to the previous Holocene extends far beyond the scientific and geological community, with several cultural theorists, in particular Donna Haraway and Bruno Latour, also discussing the so-called new epoch's significance and implications (Waters 2016:137). Following Haraway and Latour, an increasing amount of literature exists that tries to "articulate what the new human condition in the Anthropocene might be in ethical, historical, and philosophical terms" (Zalasiewicz et al. in Palsson et al. 2013:7). This study, rooted in digital and media culture, contributes to this existing dialogue by firstly, examining the phenomenon of being human and the nature of human-nonhuman relations within the context of the Anthropocene and, secondly, looking critically at key theories and concepts emerging from the circumstances of an environment changed by human actions. Thus, this exploration is critically interested in what constitutes the new condition that accompanies the Anthropocene society (Palsson et al. 2013:11), especially in terms of its nonhuman agencies and their visual representations on Instagram.

If the Anthropocene signifies the earth turning into "a mere echo chamber in which the human being will be the only source and telos of agency" (Szerszynski 2017:253), does this instinctively imply that nonhuman agencies will disappear or become irrelevant within this new epoch? Is the Anthropocene an era characterised by the narcissistic centring of man above any other form of being? Who or what should we turn to in order to overcome this environmental crisis? The existing theory surrounding the Anthropocene follows a common divide in response to these questions. On the one hand a strong argument for a human exceptionalism approach to environmentalism exists. On the other hand, in response to the critique against human-centredness, several theorists argue for a nonhuman turn. Although these two categories are not always clear-cut, they

both present different ways of thinking through the nature of being in the Anthropocene and in contemporary society.

Human exceptionalism (also referred to as anthropocentrism, human-centredness and human supremacy)² is understood as the belief or “lived worldview” (Crist 2017:62) that human beings are more significant than and explicitly different from nature, animals and other species. Often categorised as a key part of modernity and western culture, human exceptionalism argues that human beings are superior to nonhuman others, owing to their dissimilarities, such as the ability to reason rationally (Plumwood 2007). Stemming from the Age of Enlightenment, human-centredness is often critiqued for exploiting other species and causing destruction to the planet by exerting human domination and power (Plumwood 2007).

Despite the mass postmodern movement towards the belief in scientific evidence of human evolution and current critique against human supremacy, anthropocentrism is still a widely accepted point of view. Environmentalists, such as Dave Foreman (1991), Christopher Manes (1990) and Val Plumwood (2007), show how the underlying thought of human domination runs throughout environmental philosophy, based on seminal anthropocentric essays such as John Passmore’s *Man’s Responsibility for Nature* (1974). Similar to Passmore, human-centred theorists, such as Norton (1984), Hayward (1997) and Smith (2010) defend anthropocentrism and consider the value of the human being over nonhuman others. Notably, such theoretical arguments maintain (contrary to popular belief) that a human-centred approach can have positive affects within the context of the Anthropocene, especially in terms of the ethical treatment of other species, since anthropocentrism evokes a sense of responsibility towards human and nonhuman others. For instance, Smith (2010:243-244, emphasis in original) argues: “Because we *are* unquestionably a unique species—the only species capable of even contemplating ethical issues and assuming responsibilities—we uniquely are capable of apprehending the difference

² I use the terms human exceptionalism, human-centred, anthropocentric and human supremacy interchangeably throughout the study.

between right and wrong, good and evil, proper and improper conduct towards animals. Or to put it more succinctly if being human isn't what requires us to treat animals humanely, what in the world does?" In addition, the validity of human exceptionalism is often highlighted by the philosophical thought that humans categorically cannot know the experience of an animal or nonhuman fully (Shapiro 2003:67).³

In constant conversation with a human exceptionalism approach to species relations is the reasoning for an equal intertwining of human and nonhuman entities, which is expressed in the theoretical exploration of a so-called nonhuman turn, posthumanism and interspecies or multispecies relations. Cultural theorists discussing these notions, such as Haraway (2015a; 2016) and Latour (2014), suggest that even though the Anthropocene is considered to be an era of environmental change rooted in human agency, it does not mean that this human agency should automatically imply a human-centred approach to life on earth. Conversely, these theorists maintain that a key characteristic of the new environmental epoch is also the possibility of escaping the human condition by imploding humans and nonhumans into multispecies relations (Szerszynski 2017:254). Within the human-nonhuman amalgamation categories, subject-object relations and dualistic thinking no longer exist, but rather entangle with one another. By conjugating the human and nonhuman, nonhumanism argues that it breaks away from the human (and its associated agency) and empowers the nonhuman by giving it agency that could result in taking nonhumans more seriously (Hird & Roberts 2011:115). This is typically referred to as the **nonhuman turn** or a possible nonhumanist approach.⁴

Considering these various theoretical approaches within the context of environmentalism and the Anthropocene, it is evident that there are two key *tails* of thought on species relations: anthropocentrism and nonhumanism. It is at the intersection of these two perspectives that online images of the significant

³ Precisely what is meant by anthropocentrism and its various components is explored further in Chapter Two.

⁴ In Chapter Three I discuss nonhumanism extensively in relation to human exceptionalism, while critically considering the place of the human within the nonhuman turn.

human-dog relation, which forms the focal point of this study, occurs. Therefore, the human-dog relation and its images on social media can be interpreted, explored and understood from a variety of perspectives. From an anthropocentric perspective, the human stands superior over the dog in a human-animal relation. In other words, the human is placed at the centre of the relation and his social construction and experience is related to the dog. Human exceptionalism most likely argues that it is impossible to relate how the dog experiences the world and therefore the human is of central consideration in the relationship. In turn, a nonhumanist point of view would probably show that neither the human nor the dog, as a species, should be privileged over the other. They are equal entities, with equally valuable experiences of the world that can be expressed. The nonhumanist maintains that humans and dogs occur in a multispecies relation, entangled in a human-nonhuman relation.⁵

Another interesting dimension is added to these perspectives with the addition of the (nonhuman) technology of social media.⁶ Does the use of social media to mediate the human-dog relation allow humans to extend their projected experiences onto that of their dogs? Comparatively, do these images show humans living in entanglement with dog species? Moreover, does the technology of social media as a nonhuman agency also become part of the multispecies entanglement, resulting in a human-animal-technology assemblage? Finally, how do these images mediate an environmental consciousness in the context of the Anthropocene? These questions are addressed throughout this exploration by referring to the ideas of *being-with* and *becoming with* respectively.

⁵ Notably this brief summary of anthropocentrism and nonhumanism is an oversimplification of the concepts. This brief description serves only as a background to contextualise the study. The two perspectives are unpacked in detail throughout the study.

⁶ Another increasingly popular point of view that, similar to multispecies studies and nonhumanism, seems to act as a mediator between the human and the nonhuman, is the notion of being “more-than-human”. The more-than-human is a phenomenological category which “positions humans as *within*, as *of*, something bigger than is generally apparent” and allows us to encompass the experience of being in relation to technologies, animals and artefacts (Affifi 2016:161). More-than-human experiences comprise of both human and nonhuman experiences where humans entwine with other things.

○ **B is for *being-with* and *becoming with***

A particular way of understanding the experience of being (and accordingly also relations to others) is philosopher Martin Heidegger's phenomenological notion of "Being" in his seminal text *Being and Time* (1927). For Heidegger, human beings have a unique distinctiveness that sets them apart from other nonhuman entities. Part of their distinctiveness lies in the ability to be interested in their own entity of being – we are able to engage with what it means to be human and consider the essence of being. Heidegger conceptualises the notion of being as *Dasein*. For Heidegger (1962[1927]), *Dasein* refers to both the human being, as well as the kind of being or existence that humans have. In other words, through the analysis of *Dasein*, Heidegger attempts to make sense of human existence or the experience of being human. He argues that the only possible way to grasp the human condition is to examine how humans interpret themselves in everyday life (Philipse 1999:440). Thus, he explains the world and its phenomenon from the primary experience of the human being.

Central to *Dasein* is the notion of a joint existence. Heidegger (1962[1927]:155) argues that the individual is never alone and has to share the world, as well as the experience of being-in-the-world, with others. This shared existence is referred to as *Mitsein* or *being-with* (Heidegger 1962[1927]:155).⁷ *Mitsein* dismisses an individual consciousness existing without the material world, since "we cannot understand who we are and what we do in daily life except in terms of our relations to others" (Philipse 1999:448). Thus, in order to understand the nature of being, we need to consider the nature of our being-with-others who are also in the world – how we relate to others and other things. *Being-with* implies that human beings stand in constant relation to others and we come to define ourselves through these relations so that "the existence of the Other is part of my understanding of everything in the world" (Russow 1980:132). Through the conceptualisation of *Mitsein*, Heidegger argues for a co-constitution of the world.

⁷ I place '*becoming with*' and '*being-with*' in Italics throughout the study when referring to the notions specifically outlined by Heidegger and Haraway, to indicate it as an entire concept.

Notably, Heidegger does not explicitly state who and what he exactly considers to be the other, he only explains: “By ‘Others’ we do not mean everyone else but me – those others against whom the ‘I’ stands out. They are rather those from whom, for the most part, one does not distinguish oneself – those among whom one is too” (Heidegger 1962[1927]). The notion of being-with-others therefore makes it clear that we share the world with other *entities*, who are capable of perceiving the world themselves (Russow 1980:135), yet it is not clear whether or not these are human or nonhuman others. Owing to (1) Heidegger’s primary concern in *Being and Time* with the forms of being specifically relating to being human; and (2) his later teachings of the animal as poor in the world as well as significantly different from human beings (1938); Heidegger’s *Mitsein* should arguably be read in terms of *being-with* other *humans*. However, recently theorists (Buchanan [2012], James [2009], Bailey [2012] and Andersson [2017]) have suggested that the notion of *Mitsein* should be expanded to consider *being-with* other humans *and nonhumans* – reformulating Heideggerian thought from a human-animal studies point of view. Furthermore, the relation between humans and animals has often been described in terms of Heidegger’s *being-with*, arguing that humans share the world with animal subjects that have a being of their own (Bailey 2012). Accordingly, I argue that, in Heideggerian terms, humans exist as *Mitsein* with animals, in the sense that humans come to define and share their world with reference to animal others. From a Heideggerian human-animal perspective, the human-dog relation can be interpreted as humans *being-with* dogs or **humans *being-with* companion species**.⁸

In terms of multispecies relations, seminal cultural theorist Donna Haraway employs the notion of *becoming with* to explain the entwined relation between humans and nonhumans (including animals). For Haraway (2008:4) humans are always in the process of becoming and we become beings in coalition with nonhuman others, who entwine with our being. Therefore to “be one is always to *become with* many” (Haraway 2008:4). Jordan (2011:266) suggests that it is

⁸ Here I provide brief and simplified view of Heideggerian thought in relation to the study and my own perspective. I expand on Heidegger’s philosophy and the idea of being-with-others in Chapter Four. In Chapter Four I also provide an in-depth argument for re-interpreting *Dasein* and *Mitsein* from a human-animal perspective.

helpful to understand and use this notion of *becoming with* to better unpack Haraway's multiplex notions of interspecies relations. *Becoming with* is "a practice of becoming worldly, of making a world with and out of the elements in and around being" (Jordan 2011:266). Haraway (2008) uses the idea of *becoming with* others to describe the interactions between all living entities, not just humans, in all times and places, to create a space in which to live and exist. For Haraway (2008), nonhumans and humans are *becoming with* one another: an "infolding" towards one another to make up the knot of being in the world (Jordan 2011:266). Thus, for Haraway, humans and nonhumans are entangled in complex relations that are constantly in the process of *becoming with* one another. These species do not just exist alongside one another, but are constantly developing and functioning *with* and possibly, towards one another.

Haraway adapts her *becoming with* from Belgian philosopher Vinciane Despret's reconfiguration of animal encounters. Despret (2004) articulates a new condition of understanding and studying subjects through the process of *becoming with*. She suggests that in the process of researching animal subjects, animals *become with* humans and humans *become with* animals – instead of the commonly suggested 'humans becoming animals' or 'animals becoming human' (anthropomorphism). Despret (2004:131) refers to this as "a new articulation of 'with-ness'". As a result, for nonhumanists or multispecies studies (following Haraway's theory), the human-dog relation can be seen as **human and dog *becoming with one another*** and existing as entwined entities, which forms the basis of companion species theory.⁹

Jordan (2011:255) positions Haraway's *becoming with* in direct opposition to Martin Heidegger's idea of *being-with* (*Mitsein*). He argues that Heidegger's *being-with* implies difference between subjects and the possibility of detachment, while *becoming with* connotes boundless connection and engagement amongst entities (Jordan 2011:255). Similarly, Mudde (2018:67) maintains that a key difference between Heidegger's *being-with* and Haraway's *becoming with* is the manner in which *becoming with* decentres the human "but it

⁹ The notion of *becoming with* companion species is fleshed out in Chapter Five.

does not remove, or perhaps forget, its particularity so much as it troubles the boundaries of the human as ontological category". Although I acknowledge such readings of Haraway and Heidegger's concepts as oppositional to one another, I contend that by placing Heidegger and Haraway in contrast to one another, Mudde and Jordan point to an important conversation between Heidegger's theory of being and Haraway's multispecies studies, which is often omitted or ignored.

It is surprising to find that Haraway (2003; 2008) herself does not explicitly refer to Heidegger in her discussions on companion species. Additionally, Heidegger's relationship to nonhumanist or multispecies theory has been largely omitted. Haraway (2008:221) briefly mentions the Heideggerian idea of "the open" to "ask a fundamental ontological question, one that puts human and dog together ... Here we are, and so what are we to become?"¹⁰ However, she (perhaps intentionally) does not make the connection between *becoming with* and *Mitsein*. In fact, in a footnote Haraway (2008:334) thinks of Heidegger as "no help at all", because she argues that Heidegger's formulation of *Dasein* is too far removed from feminist thought. Despite rejecting Heidegger, I find that one cannot read Haraway's companion species from an objective scholarly perspective without at least being reminded of Heideggerian philosophy. Simply looking at the syntax of *being-with* and *becoming with*, points to an evident starting point of a relation between the two concepts. Thus, I argue that it would be erroneous to read Haraway without consulting Heidegger, or at least keeping the Heideggerian idea of being-with-others in mind. Throughout this study, I start to fill this gap by showing the relation between Heidegger and Haraway's thought, as well as rethinking Haraway's companion species with Heidegger. By engaging with Heidegger's philosophy of being and related critique of anthropocentrism, I show that Heidegger's writing not only influences nonhumanism, but also has much to contribute to anthropocentrism, nonhumanism and environmentalism.

¹⁰ Even in this specific instance Haraway (2008:367) mentions in a footnote that her idea of "the open" differs significantly from Heidegger's "open" or clearing.

Additionally, the notion of humans *being-with* dogs as well as the process of humans and dogs *becoming with* one another can aid in interpreting and unpacking the relation between humans and their dogs on social media. Consequently, I apply both the notion of *being-with* in relation to *becoming with* in my exploration of the human-dog relation on social media. These notions are not necessarily posed in opposition to one another, but rather serve as a well-rooted point of theoretical reference to grapple with companion species online.

○ **C is for companion species**

Thus far I have contextualised a critical reading of the phenomenon of companion species as it manifests on social media by considering the notion of humans *being-with* or *becoming with* dogs as their nonhuman others. But what exactly are companion species? What follows is an unpacking of the concept with the aim of pinpointing *what* exactly is explored throughout the study.

Throughout her work on companion species Donna Haraway considers what being alive in the time of the Anthropocene *entails*. In other words, she explores “what does it mean to live and die in a time of extinctions ... [o]r exterminations?” (Haraway 2010:54). Furthermore, she contemplates how humans and nonhumans can thrive within this context - how to surpass the problems that the Anthropocene presents. That is to say, she not only thinks through the ontology of being or living within the Anthropocene, but also considers the ethics of living better under these current circumstances (Haraway 2010:54). To accomplish this task, she turns to the notion of kinship or significant otherness, arguing that we should explore and learn from relations with our environmental companions to build a flourishing world.¹¹

¹¹ In her earlier considerations of interaction between different entities, Haraway commented on the postmodern fusion of man and machine in terms of beings becoming cyborgs. She argued that these cyborgs held the potential to renegotiate political and social conflicts in society (Haraway 2006[1985]:291). However, in her recent writings (2003; 2008) she prefers the term companion species, asserting that entities live together in “significant otherness” (Haraway 2008:165). In other words, where Haraway once considered technological devices such as wheelchairs, automobiles and computers as extensions that make humans cyborgs, she now considers these to be entities that man lives with in a joint existence. They too are man’s significant others (Haraway 2008:165). Thus, she encourages us to abandon our inner cyborgs and, in exchange, embrace our companion species (Grassie 2011). As a result, companion species (and their significant otherness) is used to investigate critical concepts including politics, technology,

In *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People and Significant Otherness* (2003) and its extension, *When Species Meet* (2008), Haraway introduces her notion of companion species, which she uses to describe the kinship of different species, who are joined together as significant others. She argues that this relationship represents the current implosion of nature and culture (natureculture), as well as the lack of distinction between humans, technology and animals (human-nonhuman). Haraway (2003:16) explains that companion species are complex, co-constitutional, impure and history specific. This makes it a significant concept to consider with various aspects and applications.

The definition of companion species also becomes evident in the combination of *companion* and *species*. To have a companion means to be accompanied by something or someone, with a sense of reciprocation (Haraway 2008:17). In turn, Haraway (2008:17) attaches species to the Latin word *respecere*, arguing that it implies a joint sense of respect and registering of each other. She also uses species in terms of its historical, broader meaning, which “gestures to particular ways of life and to any relevant gathering of kin” (Van Dooren et al. 2016:5). Species do not merely refer to complex categories of beings, but also denotes different methods of regarding other entities. In this manner, companion species is not identified as a means of classification or taxonomical grouping (Van Dooren et al. 2016:5), but rather a way of regarding one another (Jordan 2011:266). Jordan (2011:268) maintains that Haraway’s concept of companion species must be used as a “divination or thinking tool ... to pry open how we make our worlds in concert with other beings, especially those whose species may not seem obviously to be the same as our own species”. My exploration therefore values companion species in all its complexity and critically considers its use as a ‘thinking tool’ to understand the binding of human and nonhuman others. That is to say, interpreting *being-with* and *becoming with* in the world, in turn, interprets companionship.

biology, history and relationships throughout Haraway’s writings. I discuss the relation between cyborgs and companion species in particular further on in the study.

Haraway (2003:12) finds that implicit in the syntax of companion species is the idea that companion species exist as a plural – species cannot be singular. Equally, the etymology of the term ‘companion’ (*com* – together with and *panis* – bread) stresses the required *two*-getherness of entities. As a result, companion species are about a relating, a partnership, which cannot exist without components associating with one another. There has to be (at least) two partners in a relationship to be considered companion species. Moreover, Haraway (2003:18) argues that these two companion species are tied to specificity and the actual fleshy acts of relating, i.e. the ‘on-the-ground’ empirical interactions between beings.¹² Accordingly, Haraway focusses her work on such a partnership of companion species by exploring the particular relation between two specific species: humans and dogs. For Haraway, the specific relationship between human beings and dogs is the ultimate manifestation of companion species. She takes the “‘dog-human’ relationships seriously” and explores how “our shared histories with dogs might inform a more mutual and therefore ethical basis for relationships between all kinds of entities” (Cassidy 2003:324). Following Haraway, we can therefore add to the definition of companion species arguing that it is best exemplified by the companionship of *humans and dogs*, which manifests in contemporary society.

It is important to note, however, that although Haraway uses the idea of human-dog relations to think through issues in the Anthropocene she maintains that dogs are the critical point of her argument and not other species. She explains: “[D]ogs are not an alibi for other themes” (2003:5) and highlights that her main interest is in these specific animals. In an interview with Wolfgang Shirmacher (in Cassidy 2003, emphasis added), Haraway makes this notion clear:

¹² The notion of dealing with companion relations phenomenologically is important to Haraway. She explains that through specific narratives and stories about companion encounters, she deals with the messy, the dirty and the action of a specific community (humans and their dogs). For Haraway (in Van Dooren et al. 2016:15), this is the best manner to explore these relations, since the “point is to make a difference in the world, to cast our lot for some ways of life [death, being and becoming] and not others. To do that, one must be in the action, be finite and dirty, not transcendent and clean”. Haraway (2003:18; 20) aims “to stay close to the action” and “get dirty” with the dogs, by focussing on the actual happenings within the distinct human-dog relation – the smallest and most direct possible unit of meaning.

WS: ... we don't want to know who the dogs are, we just want to know who we are.

DH: Who is this we?

WS: We, you and me.

DH: I want to know about the dogs.

WS: Not really.

DH: Honest, really true.

WS: You do the same thing that Heidegger once advised: If you want to know about humanity look away from humanity.

DH: That's all well and good **but I also want to know about the dogs.**

Haraway wants to know about dogs, in other words she wants to know about the act of humans living with dogs, the actual connection between these specific beings, how the relation manifests, why it occurs and how human-dog relations become immersed in various scales of time, body and space of the Anthropocene. She concentrates on the distinct physical presence and meaning of dogs. For Haraway, dogs are not used as an allegory for other aspects of being human; they are what matters and what manifests.

○ **D is for *dogstagram***

Lastly, Haraway's *Companion Species Manifesto* is never-ending and always evolving as the human-dog relation is always in progress (Haraway 2003:3). Accordingly, I contribute to and further this significant, ongoing discussion, by also exploring the specific, continuing human-dog relation with technology. Furthering Haraway's above-mentioned notion of companion species, I introduce another layer to this intricate relation: the technology of social media. Since technology is embedded within most aspects of being, it is also increasingly involved in mediating, representing and playing a role within human-dog companionship. More specifically, the technology of social media images depicting human-dog relations add another *coat* to the companionship of humans and their dogs, as well as to the meaning of companion species within contemporary society, which Haraway has opened up by blurring the boundaries between humans, animals and technology. Van Dooren et al. (2016:10) explain that species relations extend beyond personal encounters into the online realm of viral videos, YouTube and social media, which share a constant stream of

virtual companion species encounters.¹³ Inevitably, “emergent work in the field of multispecies studies is responding to these twenty-first century media with projects that deploy critter cams or orbit around Facebook fan pages and Meetup groups” (Van Dooren et al. 2016:10). My critical reading then also responds to technological platforms by particularly venturing into the world of social media images labelled as *dogstagram*s. A brief account of these images follows.

On social media, specifically Instagram - a popular platform that focusses on the capturing and sharing of images and videos (Hu, Manikonda & Kambhampati 2014:595) – people tend to share content of a large variety. Hu, Manikonda and Kambhampati (2014:596) identify eight prominent categories of images shared by users: friends, food, gadgets, captions, pets, activities, selfies and fashion. As a result, photos of pets are a prominent feature of content shared on social media platforms and in virtual communities. A large amount of these pet images contains dogs. In fact, one out of every five pictures shared by dog owners includes their dog, while 11% of dog owners have created an account dedicated to or for their dog (Irishdogs 2017). In general, dog owners share an image or refer to their dogs on social media six times per week (Spector 2017).

With such a large amount of dog pictures generating and circulating online, specific hashtags on Instagram (#dogstagram and #dogsofinstagram) are used to identify these images. Therefore, when a user shares an image of a dog on the platform, they usually add these hashtags (amongst others) to identify their image as a photo of a dog. The amount of these images shared to date has grown

¹³ The human-dog relation also stretches into other realms of visual culture, which depict the connection between man and his so-called ‘best-friend’ in various forms. Films, including Disney’s *101 Dalmatians* (1961), *Beethoven* (Levant 1992), *Marley and Me* (Frankel 2008), *Hachi: A Dog’s Tale* (Hallström 2009) and *A Dog’s Purpose* (Hallström 2017), show the loving and emotional journey of life with dogs and reveal that this relation is often complex. Similarly, throughout the various periods of art history, artists illustrate the convergence of human beings and their companion species or use dogs to think through complex notions of being human. An infinite number of artworks exist with dogs, or human beings and their dogs, as the main subjects. For example, Gauguin’s *Still Life with Three Puppies* (1888), *The Dog* (Francisco Goya 1820), Balla’s *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash* (1912), or Jeff Koons’s *Balloon Dog* (2013) and *Puppy* (1992) – to name just a few. Similarly, subject to the broader shift of modernism to postmodernism, companion species have also been the focus of several photography studies, such as William Wegman’s *Weimaraners* series. I mention such visual examples throughout the study in dialogue with theoretical concepts.

to such an extent that a virtual (imagined) community has formed know as *Dogs of Instagram* and these images are commonly called *dogstagram*s. In other words, in the same way that the selfie is a worldwide phenomenon, so too is the *dogstagram*. A *dogstagram* can therefore be defined as a digital photograph, typically taken by a camera phone, with a dog as its key subject matter, which is then shared to a social media platform, such as Instagram (Figure 2).

The *dogstagram* has become so influential in contemporary society that a new social media platform *BarkFeed* has been established, dedicated solely to dog pictures (Risman 2015). In addition, several dogs on Instagram are used as so-called ‘animal influencers’ to promote various pet-related products, forming part of a growing section of the advertising sector (Ungerleider 2016) and a billion-dollar industry (Igneri 2016:67). Developers of *BarkFeed* argue, in a typical anthropocentric manner, that *dogstagram*s and photos with dog subject matter make people happy and make them feel better. Additionally, as seen in the *tail* of the Stonehouse photograph, these photos seem to form communities and connections across borders and species, which in turn relates to the notion of multispecies. Sonnekus (2017) explains that the dog community on Instagram forms supportive ties. Thus, these images play an important role in society (Risman 2015) as well as in the visualisation of *being-with* and *becoming with* companion species in the Digital Age.

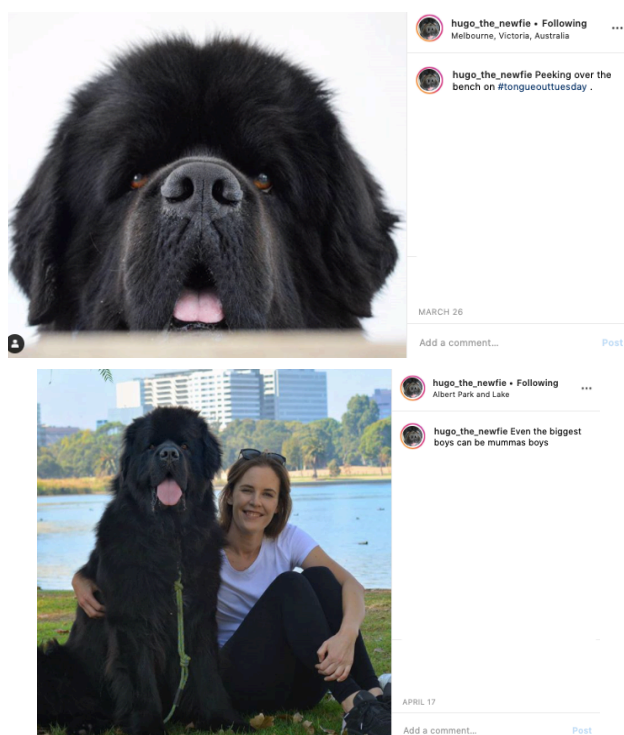


Figure 2: Two typical *dogstagram* posts from the Instagram account @hugo_the_newfie, showing that a *dogstagram* is an image where a dog is a key subject, 26 March 2019; 17 April 2019. Screenshots by the author.

1.2.2 Need for the study

Based on the discussion outlining the background, context and understanding of the study it becomes clear that a critical look at companion species is, firstly, essential to the current discussion of the Anthropocene and the environmental crises. Theory considering the Anthropocene holds the possibility of transformation so that “beings are liberated not merely to serve each other in fraternal and sororal love, but also to find their own strange new destinies and meanings” (Szerszynski 2016:296). Critically considering companion species results in a better understanding of being human with nonhumans, which contributes to picturing and embodying different futures for the planet and its species. The need for an analysis of companion species, is similar to Haraway’s need to explore human-dog relations: to nurture kinship in order to build a planet of sanctuary, multiplicity and growth. By critically considering Haraway’s notions the study enhances this conversation on kinship and prosperity to move forward from the current ‘diagnosis’ of the Anthropocene.

Palsson et al. (2013:4) argue that there is still a chance to alter or reverse some of the fundamental causes of environmental crises. In addition, they argue that the responsibility to take on such an opportunity lies not only with the sciences, but also with the humanities, social sciences and anthropologists (Palsson et al. 2013:4). There is an increasing need for fresh and innovative research from a humanities point of view on environmentalism, especially since the Anthropocene is mostly a result of human activity. A study of companion species therefore addresses the above-mentioned need within the field of humanities (and digital humanities) adding to the “change in perspective and action in terms of human awareness of and responsibility to a vulnerable earth” (Palsson et al. 2013:4). Furthermore, a discussion on companion species enables necessary conversation regarding conservation in contemporary society and aids in communicating about the environment in the context of the Anthropocene (Lorimer 2010b:42).

Seminal visual culture theorist, Nicholas Mirzoeff (2014:213), explains that owing to the fact that earth is still within the early developmental stages of the

Anthropocene, humans cannot simply *see* the epoch across various dimensions of time. To put it simply, the Anthropocene cannot be drawn out in a basic analog or timeline to show its development as, for instance, the Holocene or Ice Age can. As a result, Mirzoeff (2014:213) suggests that the Anthropocene has to be *visualised*, which implies an intricate mix of agency, classification and aesthetics. By detecting traces of the Anthropocene in visual practices, such as art history, Mirzoeff reveals that the Anthropocene is built into our everyday senses and perceptions. Our everyday practices, information, ideas and images of the visual embody and visualise the Anthropocene to such an extent that we do not contest its manifestations (Mirzoeff 2014:226). Notably, Mirzoeff (2014) also argues for a 'countervisuality' that opposes the taken for granted visualisations of the Anthropocene. Following this line of thought, it can be argued that images of companion species online, as visual culture, also visualises aspects of the Anthropocene. Hence, the realm of visual culture – more specifically the visual culture of images of dogs on social media – is closely related to the Anthropocene, not only in its portrayal of companion species or environmental matters, but also through its medium of visibility. Prompted by Mirzoeff, it is evident that the unconscious visualisation of the Anthropocene requires scrutiny and reimagining, which is a call I respond to by critically examining online images of companion species within this new epoch.

Secondly, a study specifically regarding dogs is also increasingly significant. Dogs are important. More specifically, dogs are important as companions to human beings and have never been as impactful than in contemporary society. Canine ownership has reached an all-time high, with dogs being the most popular pet worldwide (Walden 2017). Moreover, pet owners think of their dogs as members of their family and treat them as such. For example, 45% of owners say they have bought their pets birthday presents, 31% of owners admit to cooking especially for their pets (Shannon-Missal 2015) and 27% of American owners have had professional photographs taken of their pets (Walden 2017). These statistics reveal an important and intricate relationship between human beings and their companion species. Owing to the fact that dogs, in particular, feature so

prominently in society it is vital to explore their impact on our understanding of the world, as well as how they matter to the community in which we live.

By analysing online images of companion species, the study, thirdly, addresses an important dialogue of the importance and place of social media in the Digital Age. Social media networks (platforms and posted content) are an important part of life in the twenty-first century and have changed the manner in which society functions in several ways, including how we communicate and socialise (Miller, Costa, Haynes, Sinanan & Nicolescu 2016:x). It is a part of society that constantly generates agency, social structures, social critiques, new technologies and communities. As a result, social media now forms part of our everyday being and practices (boyd 2015:2; Couldry & van Dijck 2015:1). It is therefore a remarkable medium producing meaning at an immense speed in society, which has become important to analyse in terms of its function and significance (boyd 2015:2). By examining the workings of a social media platform (Instagram), as well as the meaning of the content of this platform (what do people post, why do people post and what are the consequences of these posts), the research contributes to the crucial and increasing discourse of social media and online communities (Miller et al. 2016:1). Moreover, it also addresses the limited, and perhaps more crucially, conversation of social media and environmentalism. Colliding the (often opposing) worlds of technological social media and the natural environment could also show flourishing possibilities for the current human condition, while simultaneously highlighting potential dangers of such a compound.

Additionally, as a global phenomenon, these images – as well as the human-dog relation – are significant areas of study in a global context. However, the examination is also relevant and necessary in a South African society. South Africa falls under the top 20 dog populations in the world (Walden 2017), demonstrating that dogs (amongst other pets) form a critical part of South African society. Several South African dog owners form part of the *Dogs of Instagram* community and have thousands of followers (Sonnekus 2017). As a result, the study is applicable both locally and internationally.

Finally, the analysis also proves to be integral to the developing field of digital humanities - the junction between digital technology and humanities disciplines (Drucker 2014:9). The study contributes to the discourse by: (1) developing a digital project; (2) generating digitally born research; and (3) critically discussing and evaluating the practice of digital humanities. Borgman (2009:2) maintains that this “is a pivotal moment for the digital humanities ... [m]uch is at stake in the community’s ability to argue for the value of digital humanities scholarship and to assemble the necessary resources for the field to move from ‘emergent’ to ‘established’”. The study aids in and contributes to this development and is therefore central to this revealing scholarship. Furthermore, digital humanities play an important role and have a great responsibility in the new Anthropocene. Nowvskie (2015) explains that digital humanities has a responsibility in conserving, memorising and preserving the environment through the means of the digital. In turn, digital humanities can develop a practice of repair and resilience that is critical in the Anthropocene, giving a voice to those with ideas in overcoming the environmental problems (Nowvskie 2015:1; 12). In doing so, perhaps the study also reveals and expands on the role that digital humanities play in addressing current environmental problems.

To summarise, my critical reading of companion species online is significant in contemporary society, because it simultaneously considers: environmental and anthropocentric issues; the specific role of dogs (an ever-growing, popular and impactful kinship) globally and locally; the capacity of social media in contemporary society and environmentalism; and the field of digital humanities, its functionality and its contribution to conservation.

1.2.3 Scope of the study

The study consists of concurrent components, or what I like to call layers, that overlap and develop in constant dialogue with one another. Firstly, the study contains a theoretical and critical reading of Haraway’s companion species in terms of humans *being-with* dogs and humans and dogs *becoming with* one another. Notably, the study is not a collation between Heidegger and Haraway or human exceptionalism and nonhumanism (i.e. Heidegger versus Haraway and

anthropocentrism versus multispecies studies). Rather it is a critical examination of Haraway's notion of companion species aided by Heideggerian philosophy within the context of the divide between anthropocentrism and nonhumanist theories. Therefore, the study rethinks *being-with* and *becoming with* companion species, instead of pre-empting the two notions on opposite ends of a spectrum.

It must be clearly stated that I am critical of the philosophical attempt of nonhumanism to evade human behaviour, traits and way of being. By reading Haraway's nonhumanist text and phenomenon of companion species in relation to Heideggerian philosophy, I show that the nonhuman does not evade the human. Rather the humanist traits infiltrate nonhuman theory, just as Heidegger's *being-with* seeps into Haraway's *becoming with*. Despite this contention, I do not align myself uncritically with an anthropocentric point of view. Although I argue for the place of the human in multispecies relations, this does not mean that I believe the human is a supreme species over others. Rather I attempt to engage with the human-animal relation to figure both the role of the human and the dog in companion species relations, cognisant of their differences and various modes of being, including how they manifest in the digital realm. In doing so, I align with new media and communications theorist Joanna Zylińska's (2012) approach to bioethics, which urges us to embrace certain multispecies principles and relations, while still taking the human seriously.¹⁴

I also do not wish to categorise Heideggerian philosophy within a specific school of thought or employ a critical outlook on Heidegger's thought. As one of the most influential and critiqued modern philosophers, Heidegger's philosophy of being is complex and often interpreted differently by scholars across the world. For instance, some, such as Oliver (2008) and Derrida (1989), consider his philosophies anthropocentric, while others, like Dreyfus (1991) and Davis (2010) interpret Heideggerian theory as a break from human supremacy. Much debate also exists surrounding the metaphysics, transcendent and humanist nature of Heideggerian thought. As a digital and media culture scholar, it is

¹⁴ For more on Zylińska's bioethical framework, refer to my discussion on the theoretical and methodological approach of the study further on in this introduction.

beyond my scope to attempt to discuss or engage in such critical Heideggerian philosophical thought. Instead I draw on my own hermeneutical reading of Heidegger, informed by other primary theorists, for example Jacques Derrida and Luce Irigaray, to specifically focus on Heidegger's *being-with* (*Mitsein*) in relation to Haraway's *becoming with* as well as Heidegger's formulation of animals.

Following this comparative analysis, I consider another layer of companion species, the phenomenon of the *dogstagram* as a representation of humans *being-with* and *becoming with* dogs in contemporary society. *Dogstagram*s are theoretically examined in terms of their depictions of *being-with*, *becoming with*, nonhumanism and anthropocentrism. In an additional layer, I also digitally analyse and visualise *dogstagram*s in the study's accompanying digital humanities project, entitled *Insta-dog*. Drawing on this digital component, the theoretical section of the study also reflects on the field of digital humanities and establishes the investigation's place within the discipline, drawing connections between the notion of companion species, environmentalism, a technologically driven society and digital computing technologies.

The digital humanities project, *Insta-dog*, attempts to make sense of the large number of *dogstagram*s shared on Instagram through the means of social computing and software studies. This digital project explores selected visual images of dogs found on social media by showcasing them in various digital visualisations. For the purpose of the study the selected images are images labelled (through hashtags) as #dogstagram or #dogsofinstagram, downloaded during a specific time period. The project examines the photographs as a large-scale dataset, instead of focussing on a singular image, to identify patterns, trends and commonalities in a set of images. It results in various data visualisations, sorted based on the images' metadata and algorithms. These patterns organise the *dogstagram*s based on identified properties in combination with a theoretical discussion relating to companion species. Thus, the visualisations group together images depicting humans *being-with* dogs. By visualising these images in this manner, they can be examined at multiple spatial

and temporal scales and present a broader, advanced picture of the phenomena in comparison to a first-hand content analysis (for instance). In doing so, I engage with the various ways in which the human-dog companionship is captured around the world (for example, which properties are prominent, which communities are formed and so on) and how the content of these images represent the notion of companion species. Additionally, the online project also provides viewers with the opportunity to participate and engage with the project in an interactive manner.

In the written component of the study I also include a layer of vignettes throughout, recounting my own experience with my dogs as companion species. My own horizon and lived experience with my companion species foreground the study as well as my interest in the human-dog relation and play a role in my understanding of the concerned theory. I acknowledge that I am a 'dog-lover' and the proud kin of two dogs, whose lives as companion species are often shared on social media. I make use of my perspective and experiences of living with and posting about dogs to articulate my thesis. English literature scholar, Karla Armbuster (2018:6-7) tells us that our dog stories are important and matter because "dogs can tell us a great deal about ourselves". I therefore present and also think through my own experiences with dogs or my own "dog stories" as part of the study to expand my philosophical exploration of the human in nonhumanism into a more colloquial realm. In this manner, I hope to add another dimension to the "many forms of multi-species communication" (Armbuster 2018:8). In my approach to these anecdotal *tails* I follow Donna Haraway, who uses a similar approach in her *Companion Species Manifesto* (2003) and *When Species Meet* (2008).

The theoretical, digital and colloquial components accompany each other in a written thesis as well as digital format, and the two components should preferably be interpreted together as a unit. Ultimately, the study aims to be a true manifestation of hybridity or, if you will, a form of companion species, with the digital, the theory and the author's lived experiences bound together in significant otherness.

1.2.4 Aims of the study

The main aims and sub-aims of the study arise based on the above exposition. Briefly summarised, my key aims are:

1. To critically consider the notion of companion species, specifically the human-dog relation, within contemporary society and the current age of the Anthropocene.
 - 1.1 To discuss the place of companion species within the Anthropocenic divide of human supremacy versus nonhumanism.
 - 1.2 To consider Heidegger's notion of *being-with* in terms of Haraway's *becoming with* in relation to companion species.
 - 1.3 To show the importance and prevalence of the human within nonhumanism.
 - 1.4 To take into account a variety of perspectives in contemporary society concerning companion species.
2. To study images of companion species (specifically human-dog relations) on social media using digital analysis and data visualisations (as unpacked above).
 - 2.1 To theoretically analyse how these images signify, mediate and relate to companion species.
 - 2.2 To further the discussion on companion species, contributing to the larger discourse of environmentalism.
 - 2.3 To contribute to the emerging field of digital humanities by generating born-digital research and an interactive online platform to study *dogstagram*s on Instagram.
 - 2.4 To consider the possibilities of the field of digital humanities or digital culture and environmentalism by reflecting on the study's digital project.

1.2.5 Research methodology and theoretical approach

In order to achieve the above mentioned aims, the study applies multiple methodologies. The thesis component of the study follows a theoretical research methodology, which serves as the premise of the entire exploration. The research is qualitative, while the discussion is exploratory and speculative, as

there are no assumptions made about obtaining a conclusive answer. The thesis contains a literature study, integrated with visual and hermeneutic phenomenological interpretations, which provides a basis for further conclusions.

To conduct this study I rely on a hermeneutic phenomenology as my key research methodology, following Heidegger's formulation of the hermeneutic dimension of phenomenology.¹⁵ In its most extensive form, phenomenology is a qualitative method that aims to understand lived experiences. It is concerned "with meaning and the way in which meaning arises in experience" (Kafle 2011:182). In turn, Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology is focussed on the lived experience and meaning derived from it, from a specific subject's horizon or point of view. Thus it emphasises subjective experiences of particular individuals or groups (Kafle 2011:186). Hermeneutical phenomenology, in line with Heidegger, argues that it is not possible to interpret a text or work devoid of judgements as any interpretation stems from a particular point of departure (McConnell-Henry, Chapman & Francis 2009:3). Using hermeneutic phenomenology as a vehicle of examination, the critical reading of companion species online attempts to understand the lived experiences of humans and dogs and how meaning is derived from these experiences. Rooted in hermeneutic phenomenology the study also traces these lived experiences as they are mediated through social media and explores various cultural contexts and theoretical viewpoints of these experiences. Correspondingly, the actual visual phenomenon of *dogstagram*s is also described and interpreted to discover the hermeneutical meaning of the online images.

Based on Heidegger's formulation of the methodology, conducting the research concerning companion species is also a lived experience for the researcher "as they attune themselves towards the ontological nature of phenomenon while

¹⁵ Considering Heidegger's philosophy as a methodological framework is sometimes met with apprehension, owing to the political controversies surrounding his relation to fascism (McConnell-Henry et al. 2009:5). Although I acknowledge this argument against Heidegger, the study's use of hermeneutical phenomenology has no interest in these debates and chooses to focus only on the thoughts of the methodology of relevance to the research, separate from Heidegger's alleged personal beliefs.

learning to 'see' pre-reflective, taken-for-granted, and essential understandings through the lens of their always already pre-understandings and prejudices" (van Manen in Kafle 2011:188). As mentioned, to reflect this critical part of the methodology, I include my own experiences as personal, anecdotal *tails* or vignettes within the study (although not as a predominant line of thought) along with anecdotal experiences of other human-dog relations, resulting in a "hybrid text to provide justice to the life world stories of the research" (Kafle 2011:190). Such a hybrid and conversing study is characteristically hermeneutic phenomenological.

Another key characteristic of hermeneutical phenomenology is its focus on understanding texts, to create a substantial reading of a phenomenon (Kafle 2011:190). The study of *being-with* and *becoming with* companion species considers theoretical understandings of human exceptionalism and nonhumanist accounts of the human-dog relation. By critically engaging with and comparing these texts the research reflects thoroughly on the notion of companion species from various horizons (Kafle 2011:192). By fusing the interpretation of these texts, the lived experiences of the human-dog relations on social media, the lived experiences of companion species, as well as the author's own personal experience with dogs, I provide a significant, new and layered perspective on companion species.

As a result, the study refers to the six guidelines of hermeneutic phenomenology (identified by Kafle [2011], based on Heidegger's outline) as a method of analysis. These guidelines include: "commitment to an abiding concern, orientated stance towards the question, investigating the experience as it is lived, describing the phenomenon through writing and rewriting, and consideration of parts and whole" (Kafle 2011:191). Critically analysing the phenomenon of *dogstagram*s from various points of departure allows us to generate new research, which encompasses the Heideggerian *fore-having*, *fore-sight* and *fore-conception* of understanding a phenomenon. Heidegger (1962[1927]) argues that in this manner we can attain a grasp on the meaning of our existence, or in this case the significance of the human-dog relation.

In turn, the digital component of this study is situated within the field of digital humanities and follows a digital methodology. Owing to the key aspect of digital humanities – investigating, analysing and presenting research in digital form – it can be considered as a conventional methodological viewpoint (Kirschenbaum 2010:2). Digital humanities mediates information and research through the means of digital technology (Berry 2011b:1) and can also be described as “the digital ‘folding’ of reality, whereby one is able to approach culture in a radically new way” (Berry 2011b:1). Situating the study within digital humanities means creating tools to produce, curate and engage with knowledge that is ‘born digital’ and exists in a digital context, as well as employing mixed approaches (i.e. incorporating theory and visual culture to support the project) and innovative publishing platforms that deviate from print traditions (Presner 2010:6).

According to Caplan (2016:4) this approach and new method of research within the field of humanities is a clear example of digital humanities, which requires methodological ingenuity. In other words, in order to generate digitally born results I develop an innovative digital or computational methodology that results in a formal analysis of the selected images. Manovich (in Hochman & Manovich 2013) argues that this is “the key question of digital humanities – how to combine ‘distant reading’ of patterns with ‘close-reading’ of particular artefacts – by proposing a multi-scale reading”. The digital project, *Insta-dog*, develops such a methodology by considering patterns in the visualisations of *dogstagram*s (distant reading) as well as identifying and unpacking the specific theoretical notions of *being-with* and *becoming with* within the images (close reading).¹⁶ In turn the study also critically reflects on this process and methodology, in order to comment on the emerging field of digital humanities.

The digital element of the study thus follows a digital humanities methodology by using computational image analytic methods, as well as custom-made software tools for big data visualisation. Based on techniques and software

¹⁶ Interestingly, this aspect of close and distant reading of digital humanities relates to the notion of hermeneutical phenomenology that considers both parts and the whole of a phenomenon (Kafle 2011:191). In this way the integration of these methodologies throughout the study relate and interact with one another.

employed by new media analyst Lev Manovich in the creation of *Selfiecity* (Caplan 2016:4), the project involves: (1) creating and extracting a dataset of *dogstagram*s from Instagram based on random selection; (2) running this dataset through recognition and analytic software, which provide algorithmically calculated estimates of commonalities in *dogstagram*s (for example, position of dog, close-up images and content in photographs); (3) extracting metadata from the images in the dataset based in the social media platform regarding time, place and other formal elements; (4) visualising this metadata and data using big data visualisation computational tools. Based on these visualisations and results deductions or interpretations can then be made.

Selfiecity has also been subject to some criticism, which can be improved upon. Some of this critique includes: an inability to come to conclusive results, based on a lack of specific research questions (Caplan 2016:5); a patriarchal team conducting the research (Losh 2014); the use of strong binary terms (Losh 2014); a lack of acknowledgement of human error within the analysis of big data sets (Losh 2014); reducing individual experiences to data sets (Losh 2014); and presenting seductive image plots as self-explanatory (Caplan 2016:6). In order to attempt to overcome these problems, *Insta-dog* asks specific research questions (stemming from a thorough theoretical exploration); uses fluid properties of identification that are not dualistic; reflects on the process of big data analysis, acknowledges and represents its possibility of error; provides clear explanations both in the digital project and through the theoretical exploration of each visualisation; and reduces the emphasis on presenting captivating images, by focussing on accurate visualisations. Furthermore, my digital exploration differs from *Selfiecity* in its size of images visualised, owing to the limited resources available and time constraints of this academic endeavour. It also varies from *Selfiecity* by not employing human analysis to identify demographic data of various sources (which could lead to bias [Sokol 2014]), since information relating to age and gender is not of relevance to the study. Finally, *Insta-dog* also digitises the context and theoretical background of the exploration, to provide a

clearer picture of the entire project and create a type of archive, which is not necessarily explicitly present in *Selfiecity*.¹⁷

My exploration also follows a specific approach to both the digital and theoretical components of the study. In literature concerning human and nonhuman relations, authors often are compelled to choose between taking an ontological or ethical approach to their research. However, since both these theoretical approaches are naturally implied throughout the study, I propose to conduct the exploration by aligning my argument to take the human seriously in nonhumanism with seminal theorist Joanna Zylińska's bioethical approach. Zylińska (2012:206), in her critical consideration of companion species and kinship, proposes an "alternative bioethics" which is an "ethics of life" based on the relation between humans, nonhumans and technology in contemporary society. Zylińska's bioethics argues for a theoretical approach that incorporates the ideas of interspecies relations, thoughts on *becoming with* animals, as well as the human processes of language, philosophy and culture (Zylińska 2012:221). Bioethics challenges the traditional ways of thinking about species relations, while simultaneously highlighting the differences and values of various life forms (Zylińska 2012:221).

For Zylińska (2012:221), studies on relations in contemporary society should consider that "the question that is posed to us is not only 'What does my pet want?' or even the Cartesian 'But as for me, whom am I?' but also, perhaps first of all, 'And what if a bacteria responded?'" She argues for an approach that studies the ontological interconnection of lifeworlds, but does not deny that there are essential categories of differences between species and ethical responsibilities that need to be taken into consideration. Based on Zylińska's bioethics, this study critically engages with Haraway's companion species by considering the human within a nonhuman perspective, in an attempt to respond to the other's presence and demand (Zylińska 2012:220). In this fashion, I, as a human researcher, respond to the world of companion species critically, acknowledging that I

¹⁷ For more information on the digital project refer to Chapter Seven, where I discuss the particularities of the project in relation to the theory of companion species.

cannot withdraw from my own human way of being. Consequently the study follows a conjoined human and nonhuman agency and theoretical approach, in alignment with Zylynska's bioethics.

1.3. Literature review

Considering the specific literature written on images of companion species online, it still remains a limited field, with a considerable amount of space for further examination. A review of sources and references regarding this examination follows. In addition, this literature review shows that the literature concerning companion species, human exceptionalism, multispecies, social media, digital humanities and environmentalism also typically occur as a knot, overlapping in themes and approaches. As a result, the literature reviewed overlaps and coincides, with certain sources being applicable in various contexts.

1.3.1 Haraway's literature

Since my exploration is based in the theoretical concept of companion species proposed by seminal scholar Donna Haraway, it is worthwhile to start with a brief review of her key texts relevant to this study, clearly establishing the applicability of her work. Haraway most prominently writes from a feminist perspective along with a strong background in biology, combining both the realms of science and sociality throughout her body of literature. In her work she places emphasis on philosophy, biology, history and politics. In 1985 Haraway published her significant *Cyborg Manifesto* in which she introduces the notion of the cyborg – a hybrid figure that combines human and nonhuman, or human and machine that allows us to think past boundaries. In *Primate Visions: Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (1989), Haraway furthers her feminist discussions on biology and technology by questioning patriarchy and heterosexuality within the science and history of primates. In this critique Haraway addresses the animal in the relation between nonhuman and humans. Lately, Haraway has exchanged the cyborg figure for the figure of companion species in her pivotal text, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People and Significant Otherness* (2003) and its extended version *When Species Meet* (2008). Both these sources, as previously mentioned, provide a critical discussion on

Haraway's notion of companion species and the complex human-dog relation in a technoscientific society. From a biological, historical, as well as philosophical point of view, Haraway (2008:3) discusses two main questions "(1) Whom and what do I touch when I touch my dog? And (2) How is 'becoming with' a practice of becoming wordly?" and contends that respect, curiosity and knowledge are bound to human-nonhuman relations. Together these two sources are the starting point and theoretical basis of this study since they discuss both the notion of companion species and *becoming with*. Most recently, Haraway has also considered the Anthropocene and kinship. In *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016) she reconfigures the relations of earthly inhabitants and calls for the conceptualisation of the Chthulucene. All of the above-mentioned sources act as points of departure for this exploration and become the primary sources on which theoretical discussions are based.

When considering Haraway's literature it is then also helpful to turn to theorists who have considered and evaluated her work (especially that of companion species) as secondary sources. For example, Grassie (2011) unpacks companion species in relation to communion species, in *Eating well together: Donna Haraway's companion species manifesto*. Other sources that reflect on the manifesto include, Lehman (2003), Heinrich (2009) and Cassidy (2003). In particular, Vint (2008) provides a helpful overview of Haraway's work in terms of the range of figures and concepts identified. Jordan (2011), Ginn (2013) and Lorimer (2010b; 2012) also consider companion species extensively in order to apply the concept to their own work regarding surfing, gardening and elephants respectively. Zylinska (2012), in turn, discusses Haraway's companion species in relation to bioethics and assesses the successes and failures of the concept of addressing better living with the human and nonhuman. Often, Haraway's texts are critiqued for not showing a clear methodology (Hamner 2003), referring to vague concepts such as love and using non-transparent language (Zylinska 2012), edging around ethical concepts (Lorimer 2010b; Zylinska 2012) and only referring to domesticated animals (Lorimer 2010b; Srinivasan 2013). However, most of the mentioned critics simultaneously express that Haraway's theories (companion species) are powerful, affecting and important. Additionally, in

When Species Meet: staying with the trouble (2010), Haraway herself addresses these critical readings, defending her work, for instance by showing that compound concepts are necessary within the age of the Anthropocene to overcome boundaries. She also notably underlines that such conversing and critique about companion species are vital and there is always more room for further discussion, arguing that we have “hardly begun [*sic*] to name the work, play, narrative, and analysis we need in the contact zones of worldly companion species” (Haraway 2010:55). It is then precisely this work-play-narrative-analysis conversation that this study proposes to continue.

1.3.2 Other literature concerning companion species

In addition to Haraway’s literature (primary and secondary sources) other theorists and philosophers have also contributed to this line of reasoning. Owing to the philosophical thoughts in Haraway’s manifesto, it is important to consider several seminal theorists that have also contemplated the phenomenon of companion species and/or the human-dog relation in their own work.

In *The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)* Jacques Derrida (1997) expresses his thoughts on the motif of the animal, including animal suffering, the idea of animality and the deconstruction of the opposition between man and animal. In turn, Deleuze and Guattari consider the idea of humans “becoming-animal” in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980), in which they describe a movement where humans and animals are no longer independent entities, but carriers of non-identity – the ultimate form of freedom (Bruns 2007:703). Deleuze and Guattari provide important discussions, however Haraway (2008:30) and Laurie (2015:142), amongst others, critique Deleuze and Guattari for a lack of consideration for domestic animals in their deliberations. Additionally, authors (such as Elden 2006, Calarco 2008 and Aho 2007) have also highlighted the reoccurrence of the subject of animals throughout Martin Heidegger’s work. Across Heidegger’s work, including *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (1938) and *Being and Time* (1927), he considers the animal as poor in the world, without space and history, arguing that humans are different to nonhuman animals, since animals lack key aspects

of being human. Naturally, then, Heidegger's animals have also received criticism of various kinds and differ from Haraway's companion species. Most prominently Derrida (in Nancy 1991), argues: "[T]he Heideggerian discourse on the animal is violent and awkward, at times contradictory". Similarly, in *Foucault and Animals* (2016), Chrulew and Wadiwel reflect on the relevance of animals in the works of Michel Foucault, including his comments on animal experimentation, training, zoological gardens, pet keeping, agriculture and consumption. Notably, although significant to the notion of companion species, these philosophical works do not consider the specific relation between man and dog to the same extent that Haraway does.

Contributing to the philosophical discussion of multispecies relations some literature discusses the various philosophical trails of thought regarding Haraway's companion species, comparing and contrasting theories and acting as secondary sources to the primary texts. For example, in *The philosophical roots of Donna Haraway's cyborg imagery: Descartes and Heidegger through, Latour, Derrida, and Agamben* (2014a), Gavin Rae highlights the possible key philosophical roots of Haraway's thinking (i.e. following Derrida, Latour and Agamben, while emanating Heideggerian and Cartesian dualism) in order to provide a better understanding of her work. In turn, in *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (2008), Matthew Calarco challenges an anthropocentric philosophical tradition towards the human animal relation, arguing that humans and nonhumans are part of an "ontological whole". Through an examination of the ethics and evolution of major thinkers including, Heidegger (in terms of a responsibility towards life), Levinas (who questions nature and ethics) and Derrida (who establishes non-anthropocentric ethics), Calarco calls for a new manner of thinking about living with animals.

In relation to posthumanism, feminism and companion species in contemporary society the following sources also reflect on animal relations. Cary Wolfe theorises the animal in relation to humanism and posthumanism and explains that the animal should be taken seriously, both in theory and practice in the twenty-first century, in *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse, the*

Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory (2003). Additionally, in *Thinking Animals* (2012), Kari Weil explores confrontations between humans and animals and the ethical, political and personal implications of these confrontations. She continues Haraway's thoughts on a borderless human-nonhuman relation, by disrupting the notion of species-specific distinctions and arguing for the acceptance of human and animal entanglement. Although Weil and Wolfe both refer to the dog throughout their research, they do not focus as intensely on the subject of the canine as Haraway does.

Some studies consider other animals through the perspective of companion species and interspecies relations. Franklin Ginn, in *Sticky lives: slugs, detachment and more-than-human ethics in the garden* (2013), provides "an everyday ethic that can accommodate more-than-human difference" by considering the British domestic garden aligned with the geographies of companion species. Jamie Lorimer (2010c), who has contributed a number of outputs regarding companion species, also considers the possibility of elephants as companions by studying Asian elephant conservation in Sri Lanka. In similar fashion, Tim Jordan (2011) examines the notion of companion species in relation to technology, questioning whether a technology such as the surfboard can be considered a companion species in the act of learning to surf.

Importantly, other theorists consider the human-animal encounter from a humanist point of view. Raimond Gaita's *The Philosopher's Dog* (2004) uses Wittgenstein's philosophies to understand animals from a humanist point of view. Gaita makes a strong argument that animals are unlike human beings and that "we should be kind to animals, but it is wrong to accord them any significant moral status" (Plumwood 2007). Churchill (2006) also considers animal encounters from a humanist viewpoint and suggests a "second-person perspective" that involves empathetic seeing to describe these relations that still emphasises humanism.

Thus, a great variety of interdisciplinary literature concerning companion species exists. The literature ranges from Haraway's texts and discussions

thereof, philosophical traces, humanist, posthumanist and feminist conversations to animals outside of the human-dog relation.

1.3.3 Literature concerning the human-dog relation

As explained, my exploration focusses specifically on human-dog relations. This section reviews literature concerning this relation, relevant to the study.

A Dog's History of America (Derr 2004) traces the kinship of dogs throughout the history of America considering their origin and role in historical events. Derr reveals aspects of the American society through his argument, however his authorship is from a non-academic background and gives a pervasive account that lacks critical consideration (Coleman 2005:484). Nevertheless, Derr opens up conversations regarding the dog's role in society (although limited to Americans) and questions the notion of human dominance over the canine. Anderson's (2004) *Creature of Empire* also considers domestic animals in a historic context, briefly mentioning dogs. In *Tamed: Ten Species That Changed Our World* (2017), Alice Roberts considers the history of the domestication of different species and how these relations have come to influence society. Roberts commences (2017:8-46) with a genetic exploration of dogs, demonstrating how they have evolved from wolves to a less-dangerous companion species. Such historical traces are helpful in contextualising the human-dog relation, especially owing to Haraway's emphasis on history and science.

Apart from Haraway's two seminal texts, a minimal amount of research considering the human-dog relation explicitly, in terms of companion species, exists. *With Dogs at the Edge of Life* (Dayan 2016) considers what it means to think outside of humanism, by using the human-dog relation as a way of thinking through political hierarchies and the human-nonhuman relation (Greenwald 2016:4). Dayan's offers a more human-centred approach compared to Haraway's companion species, since she uses the human-dog relation to consider human aspects, whereas Haraway emphasises that for her the actual being of dogs are more important. *The biopolitics of animal being and welfare: dog control and care in the UK and India* (Srinivasan 2013) considers the discourse of companion

species in terms of the human-dog relation by studying the care of dogs in India. Srinivasan (2013:109) addresses a limitation of Haraway's work on human-dog relations – only considering owned dogs – by looking at dogs “that are not loved or wanted by human beings”. Additionally, *Furry families: making a human-dog family through home* (Power 2008) studies the practices which result in more-than-human families, where dogs are considered as part of a family, or then as companion species.

In other literature formulated on the notion of human-dog relations two central themes can be identified: anthropomorphism and psychological well-being. For example, focussing on anthropomorphism, *Anthropomorphism and anthropomorphic selection – beyond the “cute response”* (Serpell 2002), explores the projection of human emotions onto animals, including dogs. Sources relating to anthropomorphism are often helpful with regards to human exceptionalism and its relation to *being-with* and *becoming with* and will therefore be read in this regard. In terms of psychological reasoning, Trigg, Thompson, Smith and Bennett (2016) discuss how the relation between the constructed identities of animals and their owners are psychologically linked, especially in the face of high-risk situations. In this case the authors specifically refer to dogs, amongst others. In, *People and companion animals: it takes two to tango* (2016), Amiot, Bastian and Martens also focus on the psychological mechanisms involved in the social relationships of human-animal relations (specifically referring to pets, such as dogs). Several other sources considering the psychological impact of human-dog relations exists. However, this study stems from a digital culture and anthropological realm and does not consider the school of psychology. For this reason, psychological sources will be considered as tertiary, while extensive research into this body of literature goes beyond the scope of this exploration.

1.3.4 Literature concerning Heidegger's being-with and Haraway's becoming with

The notion of *being-with* is best explored by referring to its primary source of conceptualisation, Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927). Theorists that aid in the specific reading of Heidegger's concept of *Mitsein* include Philipse (1999),

McMullin (2009), Russow (1980) and Zuckerman (2015). Heidegger's notion of being-with-others has also been discussed in terms of other seminal theorists, for example Dungey (2001) relates being-with-others to Derrida to consider primordial politics, while Bauer (2001) discusses Heidegger and Hegel in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and establishes Heidegger's *being-with* as important to feminist studies. In turn Duyndam (2015), examines the relation between Girard's mimesis and Heidegger's *Mitsein*, while Poleshchuk (2010) discusses the notion of the other in terms of Heidegger and Levinas. Both *Heidegger's fundamental ontology and the problem of animal life* (Hayes 2007) and *Heidegger's Later Thinking of Animality: The End of World Poverty* (Mitchell 2011) are valuable sources in view of Heidegger's thought surrounding animals. Furthermore, sources such as Bailey's *Animal Dasein* (2012) and McMullin's *Fleshing out Heidegger's "Mitsein"* (2013) extends Heidegger's notion of being-with-others. Both Bailey and McMullin, alongside Buchanan (2012), Pryor (2012), Coeckelbergh (2012) and James (2009), consider the potential of the animal as a possible other in Heidegger's being-with-others. They look at human-animal relations using the notion of *Mitsein* and are consequently of great relevance to this study.

Literature concerning the notion of *becoming with* relates back to Haraway's seminal sources, since Haraway uses the concept to discuss companion species. Therefore, sources considering Haraway's companion species also often address the notion of *becoming with*. Specifically, Jordan (2011) highlights the importance of the idea of *becoming with* in relation to Heidegger's *being-with* and sparks further thought on the relation between these two ideas. Haraway's *becoming with* stems from Despret's *The Body We Care For: Figures of Anthropozoo-genesis* (2004), which, as a result, also serves as a primary source in the analysis of *becoming with*. Despret considers the relation between researcher and animal subject by examining lived examples and concludes that researcher and animal shape one another.

Another significant source in terms of *being-with* and *becoming with* is Glen Mazis's *Humans, Animals, Machines: Blurring Boundaries* (2008). In this

monograph, Mazi “aims to challenge and correct the mainstream dualistic, Cartesian epistemic theories” (Weinstein 2008). In doing so, Mazi harnesses both theories from Heidegger and Haraway to highlight various ways of blurring boundaries between humans, animals and machines. Although admittedly anti-humanist, this source does show that both Haraway and Heidegger’s theories can be drawn upon to understand the relation between humans, animals and machine and is therefore significant. Mazi creates a space in the literature for a critical consideration of the relation between humans, nonhumans and technology, by drawing on both the human and nonhuman.

1.3.5 Literature concerning the Anthropocene in terms of human exceptionalism and nonhumanism

A large amount of literature concerning the Anthropocene epoch exists, produced by a variety of sources including the public press, media and scientific community (Braje & Erlandson 2013:116). The archeological community also often provides significant information regarding the specific geological elements of change in the environment contributing and motivating the idea of an Anthropocene (Waters 2016; Braje & Erlandson 2013). In turn, other sources, such as Steffen, Crutzen and McNeill (2007), provide a historical and conceptual overview of the concept. Even though these sources are helpful in developing an overview of what constitutes the Anthropocene, this study mainly focusses on literature exploring the Anthropocene from a theoretical, social and humanities point of view. Pálsson et al. (2013:3, emphasis added) “formulate the need for an innovative research agenda based on a careful consideration of the changing *human* condition as linked to global environmental change” with emphasis on research from the humanities and social sciences.

Seminal cultural authors considering the Anthropocene from a multispecies viewpoint include Haraway, Bruno Latour and Bronislaw Szerszynski. Latour unpacks and explores what it means to live in the time of the Anthropocene, where the environment is a main character. In *Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene* (2014), *Telling friends from foes at the time of the Anthropocene* (2013), *Fifty shades of green* (2015) and *Anthropology at the time of the*

Anthropocene: a personal view of what is to be studied (2017), he considers politics, agency, anthropology and religion in relation to the new epoch. As previously mentioned, Haraway (2015a) also considers the Anthropocene in terms of companion relations and formulates her own Chthulucene in *Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin*. Evident in the titles, *Praise Be to You, Earth-Beings* (2016) and *Gods of the Anthropocene: Geo-Spiritual Formations in the Earth's New Epoch* (2017), Szerszynski considers the Anthropocene from a religious and spiritual perspective, contributing substantially to the ontological discussion of the Anthropocene. Other significant sources considering the Anthropocene from a similar point of view include, *Can humans survive the Anthropocene?* (Hamilton 2014) and *Listening to Birds in the Anthropocene: The Anxious Semiotics of Sound in a Human-Dominated World* (Whitehouse 2015). Skillington (2015) helpfully provides an overview of literature critically considering modern social life that contributes to ecological destruction. Skillington also mentions sources, like Urry (2011), Barry and Woods (2013) and Beck (2006) that critique the human condition for the denial of the Anthropocene. Finally, Grusin studies the Anthropocene through a feminist and queer lens in *Anthropocene Feminism* (2017) and suggests the concept of 'anthropocene feminism' to counter the masculine approach that often dominates explorations of the Anthropocene.

Correspondingly, several theorists also consider the current Anthropocene in terms of human centrism and humanism. An essential source to the discussion of humanism in contemporary society is Rémi Brague's *The Legitimacy of the Human* (2017) that seeks a "new, truly humanistic, culture" to overcome current problems. Brague's theories are helpful in the interrogation of humanism and also provides insightful historical context for the continuation of humanist thought. In addition, Hayward (1997) and Norton (1984) both argue that anthropocentrism does not necessarily connote negativity and environmental destruction. Norton proposes a "weak anthropocentrism" that allows for a fitting basis for environmental ethics and also proposes that no matter the point of view (humanist or nonhumanist) the same environmentally responsible behaviours will still occur. McShane (2007) however contests this hypothesis in

Anthropocentrism vs Nonanthropocentrism: Why Should We Care?, which also provides a helpful unpacking and critique of human exceptionalism. In addition, Ferencz-Flatz (2017) uses Husserl's "humanization" and "animalization" to reflect on contemporary animal ethics. Furthermore, *Struggling with Human Exceptionalism: The Rise, Decline and Revitalization of Environmental Sociology* (Dunlap and Catton 1994) explores the relation between environmental crises and the anthropocentric paradigm, especially within the field of sociology. In *More-than-humanizing the Anthropocene* (2016), Affifi also gives a valuable critique on the nonhuman turn and argues for an emphasis on the more-than-human in order to maintain the uniqueness of being human. In the same manner Dwyer (2007) critiques Haraway by suggesting that humans feel a non-reciprocal emotional attachment towards our animals.

These sources aid in the critical discussion of human supremacy and nonhumanism in the Anthropocene and accordingly companion species. A particular useful source that draws together both arguments from anthropocentric and posthuman perspectives is *Speciesism, Identity Politics, and Ecocriticism: A Conversation with Humanists and Posthumanists* (Cole, Landry, Boeher, Nash, Fudge, Markley & Wolfe 2011). The e-conversation presents different theorists' positions on the subject and summarises the outlook of both perspectives in terms of species relations.

1.3.6 Literature concerning the Anthropocene, companion species and visual culture

In his essay *Visualizing the Anthropocene* (2014), Mirzoeff considers how the Anthropocene has been visualised throughout art history by major industrial powers and how a countervisuality could possibly be created. Carruth and Marzec's *Environmental Visualization in the Anthropocene: Technologies, Aesthetics, Ethics* (2014) offers "a new genealogy of contemporary visual culture that centers at once on environmental risk and environmental justice" (Carruth & Marzec 2014:210) by presenting a range of essays that consider the visualisations, technologies and media that depict the environment.

Art and Animals (Aloi 2012) provides a detailed description of the representation and relevance of nonhuman life in the history of contemporary art. Aloi also “exemplifies the great potential for art to inform as well as to be informed by human-animal studies” (McHugh 2015:474) and therefore becomes a critical source in the study of companion species in visual culture. Since *Art and Animals* only considers contemporary art, other sources considering animals throughout the history of art and culture are also useful, such as Morse and Danahay (2007), Morphy (2014), Kalof (2017) as well as Simmons and Armstrong (2007). Additionally, *Animal: A Beastly Compendium* (Sueur-Hermel & Mathis 2017) presents artworks depicting animals from prints and photography collections from France.

Concerning the depiction of animals not only in art history, but also in the broader field of visual culture, Baker’s *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity, and Representation* (1993) and more recently Malamud’s *An Introduction to Animals and Visual Culture* (2012), discuss the animal in the context of art, film, photography, television, fashion, commerce and living spectacles. Comparably, *Seeing animals, speaking of nature: visual culture and the question of the animal* (Ito 2008) considers images of animals in visual culture, but also argues how this discourse could contribute to environmental studies.

Several other authors focus on the use of animals within specific forms of visual culture. For instance, Bousé (2003) concentrates on wildlife films; Kalof and Fitzgerald (2003) comment on animal images in hunting magazines; and Wilson (1992) discusses animals on television. Notably, Haraway has also discussed the animal in visual institutions. In her earlier research on the world of modern science and nature *Primate Visions: Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (1989) she comments on taxidermy in the museum space in a chapter entitled *Teddy bear patriarchy: taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936*, in which the visual gaze upon the animal becomes a prominent theme. Additionally, Desmond’s *A summons to the consuming animal* (2010) considers how Heidegger’s construction of animals and human-animal relations are employed in marketing strategies and critiques this idea by

comparing it to Derrida's *The Animal that Therefore I am (More to Follow)* (1997).

Lastly, some texts not only focus on a specific aspect of visual culture, but also highlight the dog (and not just the animal in general). *Dogs and Domesticity: Reading the Dog in Victorian British Visual Culture* (Robson 2017) maps the dog's association with social and moral values in Victorian British art and culture, while *Of dogs and hot dogs: distractions in early cinema* (Tang 2016) looks at the role of dogs in films as more than just attractions. Additionally, *From Woofs to Words – Dog Characters and Human Speech in Contemporary Science Fiction* (Ylönen 2017) explores the depiction of dogs as companion species and ideas surrounding the human-dog relation in contemporary science fiction novels. From a South African point of view, Halliday (2016) looks at the human-animal relation in the work of two contemporary South African photographers (Pieter Hugo and Daniel Naudé). In Hugo's work *The Hyena and Other Men*, Halliday identifies the conceptualisation of Haraway's companion species. However, a comprehensive and critical discussion of dogs in the broader discourse of visual culture and contemporary society, especially including a South African point of view, is still needed and would contribute to the existing literature on this subject.

1.3.7 Literature concerning companion species and social media

Research concerning companion species on social media remains limited. Currently, only a few academic studies exist in this regard. Wu, Yuan, You and Luo (2016) use images on social media to examine the effects of pets (including dogs) on psychological well-being and happiness. In *Sick bunnies and pocket dumps: "Not-selfies" and the genre of self-representation*, Tiidenberg and Whelan (2017) considers self-representation on social media by examining other objects depicted in visual images, including animals. To a certain extent (although only briefly) their study also considers some aspects of animals on social media. A few short articles exist that simply acknowledge the increasing popularity of *dogstagram*s online. For example, Igneri (2016:67) comments on the phenomena of dogs that become famous on Instagram and Sonnekus (2017) notes the same

trend internationally and in a South African context. Some non-academic sources, such as *Why social media is ruining our dogs?* (Lazhur 2017) and *Dogs of influence: the popularity of social media pets* (Polyn 2017) do critically engage with the phenomenon, however these discussions lack theoretical support and are often from a personal point of view.

Referring to the specific technology of social media and Instagram, a considerable amount of studies exist that unpack and analyse the platform as well as its affects on society. For example, boyd's *Social Media: A Phenomenon to be Analyzed* (2015) emphasises the need to understand the phenomenon of social networks. Couldry and van Dijck (2015) question the meaning of the 'social' in social media, considering how social media has become embedded in everyday practices. In a similar manner, Van Dijk (2012) examines connection and multiple dimensions of social media platforms. In addition, Baym (2015) questions the political and economic influence behind social media platforms. Miller et al. (2016) also consider the reciprocal relation between social media and society by considering how social media changes the world, but also how the world changes social media. They also provide a helpful description of what constitutes social media. Similarly, Fuchs (2014) examines social media from a critical perspective, considering social media and participatory culture, big data and communication power, respectively. He applies his examination to various case studies and considers future applications of social media. Finally, Manovich's *New Media* (2001) also gives useful discussions on social media in terms of cultural analysis. These sources are helpful in providing a background to the study of companion species images on social media and Instagram.

1.3.8 Literature concerning methodology and theoretical approach

This study derives from literature examining the methodologies of phenomenological hermeneutics and theoretical approach of bioethics. In *Interpreting visual culture: explorations in the hermeneutics of the visual*, Heywood and Sandywell (1999) give a clear understanding of visual culture in terms of phenomenological hermeneutics and the lived experience of the visual. They provide a structural layout of how a phenomenological hermeneutic

understanding is gained based on key theorists such as Heidegger. This serves as a constructive guideline for the interpretation of visual images. In turn *Hermeneutic phenomenological research method simplified* (Kafle 2011), *Unpacking Heideggerian Phenomenology* (McConnell-Henry et al. 2009) and *Interpretive Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Clarifying Understanding* (Holroyd 2007) provide a clear understanding of Heidegger's phenomenological hermeneutics and are helpful in using the methodology in the critical reading of companion species. Willis (2001; 2004) as well as Webmoor and Witmore's (2008) discussions on phenomenology are also employed as secondary sources. Finally, James (2009) outlines the methodology of phenomenology in terms of animal experience and Heidegger's notion of *Mitsein* and is therefore perfectly applicable to outline how to analyse *being-with* companion species. Similarly, another useful source in relation to phenomenology is *Phenomenology of Digital-Being* (Kim 2001), which considers the Heideggerian notions of *Dasein* and *Mitsein* in relation to the digital realm. Applying these sources' guidelines on (visual) phenomenological hermeneutic interpretation allows this exploration to verbalise the experience of sharing and looking at *dogstagram*s.

As described, a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology often requires life writing or the retelling of personal lived experiences in relation to the phenomenon being explored. Providing more clarity on this notion, specifically in relation to the human-nonhuman relation and posthumanism, Huff and Haefner (2012:153) "foreground issues crucial to life writing scholarship and posthuman scholarship: agency, subjectivity, performance, truth value, and the ideological underpinnings and ethics of rhetorical effect". Huff and Haefner's delineation of life writing refers specifically to Haraway and *When Species Meet* and is used as primary source to apply such a writing style in parts of the proposed study.

The notion of companion species is theoretically explored in terms of bioethics, following seminal theorist Joanna Zylińska. Zylińska's *Bioethics* (2012) provides a clear framework of bioethics and how these approaches interact, with specific reference to the environment, Anthropocene and companion species. *Bioethics in*

the Age of New Media (Zylinska 2009) and *The Ethics of Cultural Studies* (Zylinska 2005) elaborate extensively on a bioethical approach and are also used as primary sources. Furthermore, Calder (2008) makes a strong argument to unite ontology and ethics in theoretical focus, which relates to Zylinska's argument and theory. Karen Barad's seminal *Posthuman Performative: Toward and Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter* (2003) and *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007) also provide helpful understandings of ontology and ethics in a posthuman context. Barad (2007:817) delves into the kinetic boundaries of humans and nonhumans, nature and culture and the social and scientific, arguing that these are ontological units subject to "intra-action", adding to specific properties as well as the ontological approach within this exploration.

1.3.9 Literature concerning digital humanities

Sources considering digital humanities – its origins, limitations and prospects – include: *The computational turn: thinking about the digital humanities* (Berry 2011b); *The state of the digital humanities: A report and a critique* (Liu 2011); *What is digital humanities and what's it doing in English departments?* (Kirschebaum 2010); *Digital humanities 2.0: a report on knowledge* (Presner 2010); *Getting started in digital humanities* (Spiro 2011); and *A companion to digital humanities* (Schreibman, Siemens & Unsworth 2004). These sources are used as a primary source for the digital component of the study and examination thereof. They are helpful in constructing a digital humanities project, but also in assessing the project's affectivity and place within the field of digital culture and digital scholarship. In turn, these sources reveal the current shortcomings of digital humanities, such as a lack of interpretation skills and a loss of human qualities through the means of technology, which this study can then address and attempt to overcome.

Owing to the use of *Selfiecity* as a point of departure for this exploration's digital visualisations, key sources (as well as the actual online project) discussing the project, such as Tifentale (2014), Hochman (2014), Losh (2014) and Bruno, Bertamini and Protti (2015), act as guidelines to creating a similar project. In turn, Manovich's *The Language of New Media* (2001) presents a coherent and

meticulous discussion of new media, including social media, digital culture and visual culture, which aids in both the digital as well as theoretical sections of this exploration. In turn, Caplan (2016) critically examines *Selfiecity* in terms of its shortcomings, identifying the project's ignorance of individual positions in society as well as its emphasis on digital methods in lieu of content and theory as potential difficulties. This exploration intends to take Caplan's views into consideration and overcome these problems by adding an extensive theoretical aspect as part of the exploration and digital component, which also reveals separate human-dog relations and their place within the whole of the social media network.

Finally, it is also worth mentioning literature that examines the notion of digital humanities and environmentalism or the Anthropocene. *Digital Humanities in the Anthropocene* (Nowviskie 2015) presents an optimistic point of view on the role of digital humanities in addressing environmental concerns, questioning if digital scholarship can develop practical ethics of repair, emphasise the humane and preserve lost artefacts. Nowviskie's thought-provoking ideas are extended and emphasised in Neimanis, Åsberg and Hedrén (2015); Losh, Wernimont, Wexler and Wu (2016); as well as Svensson (2016), who all highlight an important relation between digital humanities and the Anthropocene. These authors highlight how digital scholarship can support environmentalism, arguing that this study's digital component can also be meaningful in terms of environmental concerns - not only in its subject matter but also through its digital outcomes and inclusion of digital mediums. Such sources add another dimension to the theoretical exploration of this exploration's place within the field of digital humanities.



Based on this review it is clear that there is a shortcoming of an exploration of companion species, specifically dogs, on social media. I aim to address this gap in the discourse. Moreover, the literature reveals that there is a meaningful space in the interdisciplinary fields of visual culture, environmentalism and digital

scholarship for a critical reading of Haraway's notion of companion species in relation to Heidegger's philosophy and how it manifests on social media.¹⁸

1.4. Outline of chapters

Chapter One has presented the introduction as an overview and background to the study and has outlined the main aims of the research. The eight chapters that follow are divided into two sections, with Chapters Two to Six forming Part One and Chapters Seven to Nine forming Part Two. Part One critically explores companion species relations in terms of various theoretical and philosophical viewpoints, including anthropocentrism, nonhumanism and the philosophies of Donna Haraway and Martin Heidegger. Part Two builds on my reading of companion species in Part One, extending the exploration further into a virtual sphere, questioning what companion species look like and mean in the Digital Age of social networks and technological developments.

Additionally, this study is presented in layers, exploring the phenomenon of the human-dog relation. The first layer of my critical reading of companion species is set out in Chapters Two and Three. In this layer I question how humans *look at* the animal. To do so, I examine the shift from anthropocentrism towards nonhumanism, guided by Jacques Derrida. Each perspective is unpacked by referring to key theorists and ideas, such as anthropomorphism and domestication, in relation to the human-dog question. Throughout this layer, I also critically examine the place of the human in nonhuman thought and argue that the human way of being remains a key part of nonhuman reasoning.

The second layer of the research set forth in Chapters Four, Five and Six, critically asks what the human-nonhuman relation and human-dog relation, discussed in layer one, *looks like*. These chapters delve deeper into the specific

¹⁸ I should make it clear that in this literature review I have by no means attempted to include all the sources relating to the history of the human-animal relation, human exceptionalism, nonhumanism or the Anthropocene. For the literature review, I have tried to summarise sources relating to my main concerns with Haraway, Heidegger and companion species – more specifically the human-dog relation, social media and visual culture. Admittedly, some relevant literature has escaped my attention. However, I hope that the reader is open to engage with my arguments and consulted sources as I try to flesh out and layer the knowledge concerning companion species and nonhumanism in the Digital Age.

nature of the understanding of the human *being-with* animal. Here, I turn to Martin Heidegger's philosophy of being, as well as Donna Haraway's nonhuman theory of companion species. By putting Heidegger in conversation with Haraway, my main aim is to show that Haraway's companion species can also be read as a valuation of the importance of the non-anthropocentric human being in companionship with an animal being.

The final layer of exploring companion species, presented in Chapters Seven and Eight as well as the accompanying digital humanities project, *Insta-dog*, questions how the human-dog relation entangles with technology. In this layer I *look around* the human-dog relation, towards its extensions in a technological realm. I specifically focus on the digital encounter of companion species on Instagram, computing and interpreting the phenomenon of *dogstagrams*. Furthermore, in Chapter Eight, I consider techno-dog infoldings in the Digital Age and how they add to our understanding of companion species relations. Finally, the layers of the study build on one another, while overlapping in part, to inform a critical reading of living with companion species in the Digital Age.