Biocare, Biosecurity, and Interspecies Justice: The politics of Subjects as/at Risk

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Abstract

In October 2014, a multi-species protest emerged in Spain to avert the killing of a dog named Excalibur. He was suspected to have the Ebola virus after one of his human companions got infected. To prevent his killing, half a million signatures were collected in two days and a multitude of human and nonhuman animals demonstrated in the streets claiming that 'they were all Excalibur.' During those two days of intense public response, mainstream media participated in the configuration of collectives and decision-making, leading to the government's ultimate decision to kill Excalibur. Analysing one of Spain's main national newspapers, *El País*, this article traces four different forms of making Excalibur as risky and at risk: cutting, relativizing, demonstrating, and killing Excalibur.

My argument is twofold. First, the case shows that it is possible to understand biosecurity beyond biopolitics (Agamben, 1998; Foucault, 2003). Second, this paper challenges the tendency to omit the within the social studies of biosecurity. Excalibur was never fully a subject of health, family kinship, citizenship, or even death. However, he was a 'quasi-subject' at the centre of multiple

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attentions in a way that exceeds the politics of 'making' and governing life as either risky-disposable or secured-valuable. In this article, the killing of Excalibur is made not only by practices and infrastructures, but also by and with subjects and collectives. At stake are not only the mechanisms that secure or risk life, but also how subjects and collectives learn to be exposed to difference (Haraway, 1993; Hinchliffe et al., 2017: 200).

Keywords: biosecurity, biopolitics, multispecies, posthuman, death, ontological rupture.

Introduction:

Excalibur, the dog, is sitting on the sofa. He has been alone for 2 days. Despite the absence of Teresa and Javier, his human companions, he has been able to eat and drink from big buckets and a bath full of water. Unable to hold his pee anymore, he has been using the balcony as a street toilet, strangely accessible day and night.

It is a Sunday morning and Excalibur knows it. The garbage truck with its loud activities hasn't come; the neighbours' cars haven't started to stridently close their doors and vibrantly rush in the early morning. The high tunes of the metallic fences opening the stores are being replaced by the also high clamours of shorter humans running and playing with balls.

Besides the greater amounts of food and water, something else alters Sunday routine and alerts Excalibur. Non-recognisable sounds and smells penetrate the space with strange presences. Excalibur runs to the balcony where he discovers a noisy crowd staring at him, yelling his name. Tensing his muscles and tail for a second, he suddenly hears something outside the door of his home.

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From the balcony to the door, from the door to the balcony, Excalibur starts wagging his tail. Will Teresa and Javier be back home finally?

After a loud and violent sound, different from the one his companions normally make when wanting to come in, the door opens. Excalibur observes two strange humans in enormous suits behind a big metallic fence. Excalibur, who doesn't recognise them, walks slowly towards the figures. Unexpectedly, a hard prick enters his skin and Excalibur feels the pain through his muscles. He can't keep himself on his feet, neither can he stay awake. Extremely weak, he loses consciousness while his eyes remain open. Suddenly, another jab, this time in his heart. A few seconds later, Excalibur stops dreaming. He stops breathing to become a dead dog. His corpse is now placed into thick plastic bags and quickly driven off for cremation. He finally leaves the house, this time in a police van, to become a box of political dust.

Situating bio(risk) and bio(security)

The field of risk studies that developed during the 1980's has recently incorporated the governance of life systems. Prompted by the Bhopal (1984) and Chernobyl (1986) disasters, Ulrich Beck (1986) characterises 'risk societies' as those suffering from their industrial successes rather than their failures. In other words, moving on from problems of scarcity and distribution, risk societies suffer from the excesses of industrialism, such as overproduction that materialise in climate change, labour crises, or demographic conflicts (Beck, 1986). During the 1990's, advances in synthetic biology, the acceleration of globalisation, and the consequent increasing circulations of life, have promoted the inclusion of life forms in the realm of risk. As a response, biosecurity has emerged in the 21st century to govern dangerous lives through expertise, infrastructures, and technologies. Biosecurity is often

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divided into areas such as bioterrorism, invasive species, epidemics, and livestock security (Hinchliffe and Bingham, 2008; Lakoff and Collier, 2008).

In this section I draw on three important analytical frames that focus on the social and material configurations of risk. First, risk can be understood as a social construction that different groups and societies make over those collectives and phenomena that threaten their social values and power structures (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1983). Second, 'risk societies' as the material product of the excessive successes of modernity have produced an increasing awareness of the dangers of industrialism (Beck, 1986). This focus on risk and danger has also replaced the political aspirations of equality, linked to the problems of scarcity, by other forms of negative politics, oriented towards defence and security (Beck, 1986). Third, studying the emergence of pairing risk with security after the 17th century, Luhmann (1991) describes risk societies as the product of increasingly problematising risk through the sciences of optimisation and decision-making. If risk is a product of decision among possibilities, the more risks are known, the more options are included and hence, the less security is achieved (Luhmann, 1991: 28).

Drawing on these approaches, biosecurity has been studied as a social construction that reproduces power structures through biopolitics (Foucault, 2003), or the governance of lives as either valuable and protectable or at risk and disposable, or risky (Lopez and Gillespie, 2015). In this line, 'transbiopolitics' explains how security responds to different hierarchies of qualified lives (Blue and Rock, 2010). Following Beck, biosecurity is also the historical production of new forms of risk associated with the increasing circulations of life, capital, and technologies (Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero, 2009). Challenging Beck, biosecurity has been approached in affirmative ways that go beyond defence. Following the concept of 'immunitas' (Esposito, 2009), biosecurity also affords

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1 communitarian practices that respond to forms of inclusion, rather than exclusion, that which is made
2 other (Haraway, 1993; Hinchliffe and Ward, 2014). Drawing on Luhmann, it could be said that
3 most of the social studies of biosecurity study the entanglements of knowledge and risk in producing
4 (in)securities, including the risks that biosecurity interventions themselves might produce (Hinchliffe et
5 al., 2017; Lakoff and Collier, 2008). In doing this, biosecurity's subjects are displaced towards
6 disembodied configurations of life.

7 Luhmann (1991) argues that the association of risk to security emerged during the 17th century.
8 While older societies tended to identify risk with *danger*, or external, natural, and uncontrollable
9 threats, modern societies increasingly correlate risk with *security*, making risk a product of probability
10 and decision-making. The word security comes from the Latin *securitas*, or 'free of care'. Following
11 this etymology, biosecurity is the practice of defence that aims at eliminating that which causes
12 trouble and, with it, care and concern. In this scenario, Haraway encourages us to keep 'staying with
13 the trouble,' or accepting the fact that sharing the Earth and living together entails burdens
14 (Haraway, 2016). Because multispecies cohabitation brings both joy and trouble, care and burden,
15 security demands partial rather than totalising and 'either/or' responses (Despret, 2016; Haraway,
16 2016; Stengers, 1997).

17 This article aims at 'staying with the trouble' of living and dying together. It traces different
18 configurations of actors and collectives in the making of Excalibur as risky and at risk that
19 transcended negative and totalising understandings of risk. More than enacting the pair risk-security,
20 these collectives placed *care* at the other side of the boundary. The word 'care' is from the Latin
21 *cogitare*, which means to think or imagine. It is formed by *co-*, or joint action, and *agitare*, or setting
22 in motion. Embracing this joined motion-setting, this paper shows how the role of Excalibur as a

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'quasi-subject' made it possible for subjects and collectives to enact the pair risk-care, or '*biocare*.' Rather than intervening *against*, the mediated publics of this paper intervened *with*. In doing so, they set into motion a plurality of practices and meanings that were more than knowledge and biopolitics. In staying with the trouble, these collectives produced aspirations for what could be called interspecies biosecurity justice, or the embracing *and* shattering of the productive dichotomies that make more-than-human lives and deaths possible.

Methods

Drawing on one of the main Spanish national newspapers, *Elpais.com*, this paper traces the sacrifice of Excalibur, a pet-dog, in Madrid during the Ebola Outbreak in 2014. This event quickly mobilised actors while creating competing visions and concerns in a short period of time. Because of the short and intense temporality of the event, news is a strong research site for exploring the configuration of dissent, identities and matters of concern. While mass media has prominently been studied as a regulatory and policing actor, especially during risk events, this paper stresses the power of media as a site for assembling change (Bassel, 2013). My analysis focuses on the emergent practices of interspecies justice during a biosecurity intervention, attending to how newspapers mediate publics in ways that are open to new temporal and spatial contexts (Baker, 2011).

To this goal, articles from the Spanish national newspaper *Elpais.com* mentioning Excalibur and Ebola were retrieved from its search engine, identifying 878 potential articles. They were filtered by relevance and complemented with external referred articles. Selecting twenty representative articles that directly addressed the controversy with Excalibur. I analysed and coded discourses (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), organising them around salient themes that developed from iterative readings, such as ´biosecurity,' 'public health,' or 'sacrifice.' Focusing on practices of biocare and interspecies

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justice, my analysis describes four ways in which Excalibur was made as risk and at risk: cutting, relativizing, demonstrating, and killing Excalibur.

My argument is twofold. The analysis suggests that first, it is possible to understand biosecurity beyond biopolitics and thanatopolitics (Agamben, 1998; Foucault, 2003) without falling into vitalist arguments that reduce death and difference to material and ongoing interconnectedness (Braidottti, 2013). For this task, I follow the work of Hinchliffe et al. (2017) to understand risky lives as *situations* rather than as fixed properties. Second, the displacement of the subjects within the social studies of biosecurity is challenged. While Excalibur was never fully a subject of health, family kinship, citizenship, or even death, he was a 'quasi-subject' at the centre of multiple attentions. These challenged the politics of making life as either disposable and risky or valuable and at risk. At stake are not only the mechanisms that make life secured or risky, but also how subjects and collectives learn to be exposed to difference (Haraway, 1993; Hinchliffe et al., 2017: 200).

Situating 'quasi-subjects' as risk and at risk

Cutting Excalibur

This section explores the boundary work made by public health activists to situate the risks of Ebola and Excalibur within an assemblage of practices and infrastructures. According to their understanding of health and preparedness, Excalibur was not only a public health risk, but also a possible patient of care who had been put at risk through the politics of austerity and economy cuts.

In August 2014 Miguel Pajares, a Spanish priest and nurse who had been working with Ebola patients in Liberia, asked to be repatriated. His claims were published by *Elpais.com* on August 6:

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"I would like [to be treated in Spain] because we have had a very bad experience here. Here, we are abandoned, and we are not satisfied. We want to go to Spain and be treated as persons, as God intended" [own translation].

Miguel Pajares had to enrol the bureaucracies of life governance to access health. To this goal, he appealed to the biopolitics of citizenship that defines which lives are protectable and which ones abandoned. This biopolitics that arose along with the birth of disciplines such as biology or statistics to govern individuals and populations as living beings (Foucault, 2003), had inherited the previous ideas and values around the hierarchies of life. What before was a God-designed life hierarchy, passed to be object of scientific proof after the Enlightenment (Despret, 2016). The priest Miguel Pajares was appealing to the alliances of God and asking to be treated as a (western) person that deserved exceptional protection from the disposable geographies of abandonment and death production (Mbembe, 2003) to which he had dedicated his life.

However, this biopolitics that makes life either proper or improper was challenged by public health activists. On August 11, the Federation of Associations for the Defence of Public Health Services (FADSP), published a statement in *Lamarea.com* that considered the repatriation of the priest as 'unfair' and 'irrational' in relation to the continuous reduction of public health services in favour of Catholic and private health institutions, including the Order of the priest. For them, reason was not linked to God but rather to science-State alliances. The FADSP diagrammed the problem of Ebola in Spain as one produced within the European austerity measures that followed the 2008 economic crisis that restricted social welfare systems and privatised health infrastructures in the name of efficiency (García Aguado, 2013; Metropolitano, 2011).

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Health workers and activists' report placed the importance of infrastructures for securing health at the centre by denouncing the dismantling of Madrid's only epidemic hospital months before, right when Ebola broke out in West Africa. On August 12, the FADSP published in *Lamarea.com* that the previously dismantled hospital had had to be reopened under an austerity-driven urgency, with an 'improvised workshop on how to act'. The Ebola risk was not just a product of a virus or a dog, but also of the long term public disinvestment policies. In addition, the report criticised the equipment used to repatriate the priest, comparing the low-tech appearance of the Spanish uniforms with the ones used in Germany or the United States. This accusation was more complex. On one hand, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) had indicated the use of level 2 personal protective and safety equipment (PPE), and Spain had used level 3, or higher level, equipment. Distrust, in that sense, was motivated by the low-tech but safe tape that joined the three pieces of the Spanish PPE's with the one-piece uniforms of level 4 used in other countries (Ferrández, 2014: 8). However, looking at the tape was not totally inappropriate for Spanish standards. Despite the fact that the CDC did not require the use of level 4 PPE's, the Spanish legal system requires the maximum safety measures for workers (Ferrández, 2014: 9). In this context, the authorities did not provide health workers with adequate material and training, and the intervention could be categorised as 'imprudent' and 'deficient' (Ferrández, 2014: 11).

Miguel Pajares died of the haemorrhagic fevers that Ebola produces in humans, after days of unsuccessful and experimental treatments. A few days later, Miguel García Viejo, another priest from the same religious order, was repatriated from Sierra Leona to suffer the same deadly result. One of the nurses who attended him, Teresa Romero, touched her face after leaving the priest's room and after removing the biosafety equipment. This touch was the most probable route of transmission of

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1 the Ebola virus to her. Once home, she started to have a fever that was lower than the 38.6° Celsius
2 that international protocols considered as necessary for diagnosing Ebola. Not taking into account
3 that the fever standards could vary between West Africa and Spain, she was first diagnosed with the
4 flu and prescribed paracetamol (Gálvez González, 2015). Teresa kept reporting her symptoms until
5 October 6, when she tested positive for Ebola in a local health centre, becoming the first case of
6 Ebola transmission 'outside of Africa' (González and Cuesta Cambra, 2015: 68). Immediately after,
7 she and her partner, Javier Limón, were quarantined in the epidemiological hospital.

8 Situating the risks of Ebola, the FADSP explained the capacities of austerity policies and
9 infrastructures to generate deadly encounters among humans, viruses, and environments. By focusing
10 more on the role of infrastructures than on the virus itself, health experts highlighted the risky
11 assemblages between austerity, neglect, and dismantlement policies that would, ultimately, kill
12 Excalibur.

13 Relativizing Excalibur

14 On October 6, and before leaving to the hospital, Javier Limón prepared a home-made quarantine
15 for his companion dog. He kept the balcony's door open, a bath full of water, and fifteen kilograms
16 of dog food. On October 7, *Elpais.com* published the video that Javier Limón had recorded asking
17 for support to keep Excalibur alive after knowing the government's desire for his sacrifice. During that
18 day, mainstream media collected the statements of different actors who had no direct communication
19 between each other, supporting a public. In support of Excalibur's life, *Elpais.com* associated the
20 pleas of Javier's video with the statements of Eric Leroy, an expert on Ebola and dogs. On October
21 8, the newspaper published Leroy's caveat:

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"We must not kill the dog of the woman infected by Ebola, it is important for science (...) We have to isolate it, monitor it, study his biological parameters, see if it is infected, and find out if it excretes the virus. It is very interesting from a scientific point of view, killing him is useless."

For the expert, Excalibur was an object of zoonosis knowledge, or the study of disease transmission between species[1]. 'Zoonosing' and transmitting viruses and disease is only one of the possible results from the interactions between hosts, microbes, and an ecology of relations (Hinchliffe et al., 2017: 61). Indeed, zoonosis between dogs and humans is rare and limited, especially within environments that provide care to animals and humans (Chomel, 2014). Following Brown and Kelly, Hinchliffe et al. (2017: 71) have argued that zoonosis occurs only after a process of repeated and failed transmissions that include more than touching channels, such as poverty and infrastructures. The need for duration makes it more appropriate to talk about zoonosing, as a verb that needs to be done, rather than as a noun.

Leroy had argued that pet dogs can be infected by Ebola without developing any symptoms (Allela et al., 2005: 385). Excalibur's life could thus improve human lives by studying the interactions between Ebola and pets in western geographies. In situating risk for science, Excalibur was neither a patient, nor a risk who could spread the Ebola virus, but rather a unique scientific object of research. The interest lay in the specific position of Excalibur as pet, which made him more relevant for scientific goals than other animals given the histories of intimacy and co-domestication with humans (Allela et al., 2005: 389).

Intimacy concerned scientists and companions, as a practice that collaborates in producing risky bounds through behavioural risks such as kissing or sharing food (Chomel, 2014). During the Ebola

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Crisis and a few days before Excalibur's controversy, the CDC (2014) had published a guide 'about Ebola, pets and other animals.' The guide advised people feeling symptoms of Ebola to 'stop all direct contact with other people and avoid all interactions with pet(s) including petting, holding, kissing, snuggling, sharing food, or letting the pet lick you' (CDC, 2014). The statement referred to the risks of multispecies cohabitation, or the problems that arise from the burdens of living together through practices of care, responsibility, dependency, play, affection, and vulnerability. Situating Excalibur as risk and at risk through zoonosis was thus not only an object of scientific concern, but also a product of living in families.

Considering Excalibur as a quasi-relative, his companion Javier deemed his sacrifice illegitimate, for it would be the killing of a family member. On October 8, *Elpais.com* published Javier's claims:

> *"There could be alternative solutions, such as quarantine and observation as they have done with me. Or do we have to sacrifice me just in case?"*

Excalibur here was a quasi-relative and a quasi-human due to practices of co-domestication and co-dependency. He was then mobilised as a quasi-subject through metonymy: 'I am also Excalibur and if they kill him, they could kill me'. On one hand, this operation obscured the asymmetrical relations between humans and pets but, on the other, it made possible social action. Relations between human and nonhuman animals are always asymmetrical (Haraway, 2008) and so are their risks. Pets are in a position of ambivalence, sometimes considered as almost humans and at other times as almost animals (Charles, 2016; Charles and Davies, 2008; Redmalm, 2015). 'Animals are caught in a double bind,' being sometimes objects of care and at other times, of killing or exploitation (Braidottti, 2013: 76). They are, as I have called it, quasi-subjects. Embracing this ambivalence, scholars have questioned the possibilities of posthumanism. Nickie Charles argues that, while it is true that the

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practice of 'pet keeping is increasing post-human sensibilities' (Charles, 2016: 2.2), this is mediated by relations of domination (Charles and Davies, 2008: 2.1), something that, following Tim Ingold, could be understood to pass from hunter gatherer societies to pastoralists not as domestication but as transition to domination (Charles and Davies, 2008: 2.1). Thus, when pets are regarded as animals, they are 'disposable' (Charles, 2016: 2.8) and when a pet dies, it enacts a 'liminal grieving' (Redmalm, 2015). A better way of engaging within responsible ways of living and dying together is provided by Haraway who, rejecting posthumanism, argues for the need of 'getting these asymmetrical relations right' (Haraway, 2008: 263), that is, learning to be responsible with the relational and differential ways of living and dying together. Without attending to power, the mimetic movement, 'I am also Excalibur' failed to recognise the unequal relations in which humans and nonhumans engage, making impossible the existence of pure 'post-human families' (Charles, 2016). This failure obscured the relations of domination that configure human and nonhuman cohabitation practices, but at the same time it opened possibilities for change. Metonymies are the basic method for seeing one's position as substitutable for the other's, which according to Spivak makes possible social action (Butt, 2015). In this sense the fiction that supposes equalising pets and humans, while unreal, it is one of the necessary conditions for political action (Butt, 2015). In this case, the fictional statement 'if they kill the dog they could kill the human' operates to create a collective that is composed by difference but made the same for purposes of change and the consideration of societies that are produced with more-than-human subjects and collectives.

This complex recognition of similarities, differences, and relations also mobilised kinship boundaries and public-private borders. First, ideas of the public as the realm of the State were troubled. Opposition to the sacrifice was not situated within animal rights discourses, but rather within the limits

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1 of the State to preside over the family. At the same time, while the private household was defended
2 from the State, privatisation of healthcare was condemned. Second, the metonymic 'I am also
3 Excalibur' was possible through the defence of the private family as a machine of care. Like every
4 care-infrastructure, the family also generates exclusion and tends to abandon all that is outside its
5 borders (Tsing, 2012), whether humans in West Africa or non-pet nonhumans. At the same time, the
6 metonymy allowed the inclusion of otherness and a sense of community that was able to respond to
7 difference rather than eliminate and exclude it. Some of the public comments included at the end of
8 the news criticised the emphasis on saving Excalibur while abandoning the people who were dying
9 in West Africa. However, these critiques did not come from priests or nurses such as the ones who
10 had died in Spain after years of work in Liberia and Sierra Leona, but from publics of critique.
11 According to those arguments, it is necessary to accept the conditionality of care. Responsibility only
12 emerges from the recognition that caring for some will always imply the exclusion of others
13 (Haraway, 2008).

14 Following Haraway, I suggest the need for more affirmative practices of care instead of what I call
15 the 'criticism of abandonment.' This is a currently common practice that extends in social networks
16 which consists of bringing, pointing at, and making *others* as a way of responding to complex
17 events. Rather than engaging with, the critics of abandonment respond to people's concerns for
18 some victims, which always excludes others, by pointing at that lack. Engaging with the idea that
19 caring for some means excluding others can help move beyond biopolitical understandings of life
20 that tend to stress who is made disposable when protecting target individuals or populations. More
21 complex responses that destabilise the categories of proper and improper life are possible. In this
22 case, the making of subjects and quasi-subjects not only challenged biopolitical boundaries but also

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1 made it possible to respond to the subjects involved on them. As I showed above, situating Excalibur
2 as risk and at risk as a quasi-relative was a scientific object of concern and a family subject of
3 bonding. This position allowed biosecurity responses that included ecologies of knowledge, care,
4 and bonding, all of which questioned the biopolitical imaginary of life.

5 Demonstrating Excalibur

6 Supporting Excalibur as a quasi-subject, a multi-species crowd emerged to avert Excalibur's killing. In
7 'D for Delinquents: Can animals revolt?' (2016), Despret describes the story of Santino, a zoo-
8 chimpanzee in Stockholm. Santino had become famous for throwing stones at visitors. Because he
9 kept the stones near the area where visitors arrived and only on the days when the zoo was open,
10 this planning demonstrates that animals can show 'disapproval' (Despret, 2016: 25). In this section,
11 however, I am not attending to the ways in which nonhuman animals communicate their values but
12 rather to the ways in which more-than-human networks can generate change by putting the values of
13 anthropocentrism at risk.

14 The pleas of Javier Limón to avoid Excalibur's killing did not remain at the level of the family. As
15 *Elpais.com* published in October 12, 400.000 signatures were collected in twelve hours for
16 quarantining instead of sacrificing the dog. In addition, an international network of humans and
17 animals demonstrated in social media and the streets of different cities, including a night vigil in front
18 of Excalibur's home before his killing. While it was certainly not the first protest in support of the life
19 of a celebrity-animal, the novelty lay in its multi-species composition. Both online and in the streets,
20 not only humans but also cats, dogs and birds were present with banners advocating for Excalibur.
21 Most of the signs used contained the expressions 'I am also Excalibur' and 'save Excalibur,' but
22 others included a variety of emotional, political, and bodily claims: 'the threatening virus is within the

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government,' 'we are all Excalibur, no more murders,' 'Some people's mistakes are paid by the usual ones,' 'killed the dog, the rabies is not finished[2],' 'where is humanity,' 'if the solution is killing, then the responsible ones should be the ones who pay for the guilt,' 'animals matter,' or 'Excalibur will pee on your thumb.'

The word demonstration, or the public show of a feeling, comes from the Latin *monstrum,* which means to wonder and composes the word 'monster'. The multi-species crowd that was quickly organised through the media and which crossed geographical and species boundaries was, in part, a monster, or as Braidotti puts it, an impure collective made non-objective by being the negation of white, masculine, and heterosexual subjectivity (Braidotti 2017). The multi-species crowd organised an expression of bodies, language, affection, and communication that question the objectivity of species boundaries not only with their claims, but also with their very hybrid presence.

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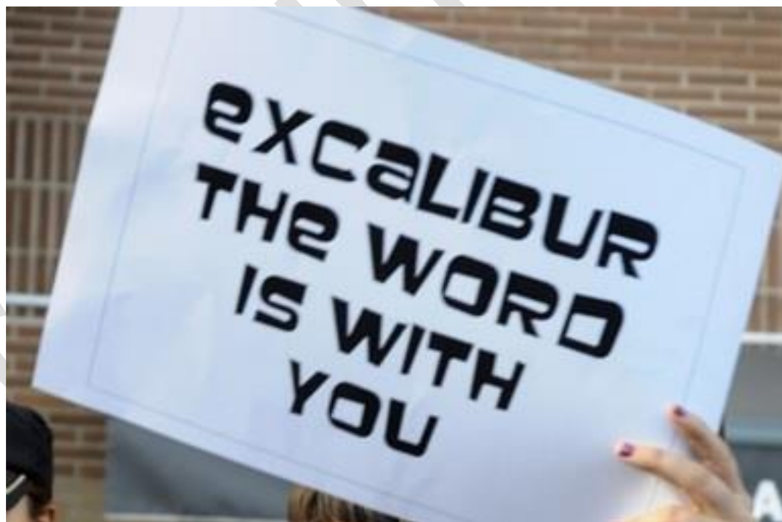

Animalist Party PACMA (2014). Picture of Excalibur's demonstration. (Own cropping to avoid disclosing participants). Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Excalibur_(24).jpg#globalusage

In one of the Spanish demonstrations, a probably misspelled English banner was massively distributed: 'Excalibur, the *word* is with you'. Rather than the usual 'world', the banner contained 'the word'. One of the first questions that arises when seeing the hundreds of dogs, cats, birds, and humans standing with banners to save Excalibur[3] is: can the animal speak? This question, as Despret puts it, requires an either/or answer (Despret, 2016: 5). While I cannot give a reasonable answer to that question, following Despret it can be argued that the demonstration created an ecological network of intentional achievements or 'agencements' (Despret, 2016: 5). While we have a considerable amount of research concerned with the problems of intentional agency, i.e. did the animals involved really want to save Excalibur, attending to 'agencements' opens new questions and results. As the misspelling 'the word is with you' shows, social scientists can actually never be sure if not only nonhuman, but also human animals really want to say what they say. Was it a mistake? Was it intentional? Who became aware of the confusion? Experiences, whether from human or nonhuman animals 'are not dependent upon our ability to translate them' (Shaviro, 2015: 29). Therefore, language should not be the privileged method for accessing intention and experience. Moving beyond language and intention is not only a matter of stronger objectivity (Harding, 1991), but also, as Hinchliffe argues, a methodological commitment that seeks 'other-than-speech' forms of knowing (Asdal et al., 2017: 26). Attending to the multi-species crowd as a form of achievement was therefore important for the multispecies public since 'what matters is 'to welcome new ways of speaking, describing, and narrating that allow us to respond, in a sensitive way, to those events' (Despret, 2016: 6).

Attending to demonstrating Excalibur in this way, the multispecies crowd challenged biosecurity as a form of biopolitics that has human exceptionalism at its core constitution. First, they troubled the question of anthropomorphism. Valuing the agencement of a multispecies crowd using language can

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be labelled as anthropomorphising. However, as Despret argues, this is an accusation that has its roots in the 19th century process of separating ecological sciences from naturalism and its practices of hunting, caregiving, and breeding, all deemed as amateur (Despret, 2016: 39). This move not only served to legitimise animal sciences but also opened a history of scientific negation of animal's subjective experience while reducing their behaviours to mere reactions (Despret, 2016: 39). In that sense, the accusations of anthropomorphism are a political move to disqualify certain modes of thinking (Despret, 2016: 38) that are anthropocentric themselves, for they assume that thought and experience are exclusively human (Shaviro, 2015: 29). In addition, as Law and Lien argue, anthropomorphism is always a relational practice; not only are animals made through humans, but also the other way around (Asdal et al., 2017: 20). By putting at risk the knowledges and boundaries of human and animal sciences, the multispecies crowd brought Excalibur, a quasi-subject, to the centre of biosecurity. The demonstration troubled the borders of intentionality, cognition, and the public. Not only were collectives able to respond to difference, but they also made visible how the privilege of speech is a power-mediated social construction.

Second, the demonstration questioned and displaced the human exceptionalism that regulates biosecurity interventions as 'anthropological machines' (Agamben, 2004). The multispecies crowd reconfigured the meaning of the publics with its technological and animal mediated presence. This crowd was able to respond to the problems of living and dying together differently beyond the biopolitical understandings of life as either valuable or disposable. By (not) questioning if the animal can protest or speak, the public engaged in an aesthetic and material form of more-than-human politics. They produced what Rancière calls a 'politics of the sensible' (Tanke, 2011: 2) that attend to what bodies can do by taking as speakers 'those who were only understood as noisy animals' (2011, 26). As *Elpais.com* published on October 8 noted, demonstrating together not only placed

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bodies at risk, when the public asked to quarantine the dog at their own expenses or when they encountered the police intervention, but also risked the very notion of the human by dissociating it from the attributes of exceptional and proper life.

In doing this, the crowd displaced the production of defence and exclusion that accompanies risk societies by 'loving ignorance' (Davis, 2002; Tuana, 2006), or the possibility of care without needing to understand the *other* by being able to respond to that which escapes representation (Davis, 2002: 155). By questioning anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism, the multispecies crowd took the subjects of biosecurity seriously. As Derrida and Rancière have argued, focusing on individuals is one of the ways to deconstruct and resist the taxonomies of species classification by showing how they are disrupted and exceeded, by adding the incalculable (Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero, 2009: 4).

Killing Excalibur

On October 8, *Elpais.com* published that: 'the dog had to be destroyed as we had nowhere to place it.' The ultimate decision to go ahead with the killing was justified by the lack of level 4 biosecurity animal centres, highlighting the relative underdevelopment of Spain in comparison to the 'biosafety animal facilities that exist in the likes of Germany and the United States'. Nonetheless, biosecurity is not only infrastructure but also the production of 'imaginative enactments' (Lakoff and Collier, 2008). These are enacted to respond to threats that are not common and which, according to the veterinarians leading the killing, are made of installations, practices, and techniques (VISAVET, 2015: 13). Biosecurity was imaginatively enacted to treat the priests and the nurse by reopening a hospital and by trying experimental treatments on the patients. It also happened in Dallas when Bentley, the dog of an American nurse infected with Ebola, was quarantined in a previously abandoned military camp. As those cases show, the lack of infrastructures cannot be isolated from

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1 the imaginative practices that accompany them. As an expert in bioterrorism, Luis Martín Otero,
2 explained in the article of October 8, proper biosecurity infrastructures could have been enacted:

3 *"We would have to use a level 4 laboratory with that pathogen, because that is what*
4 *legislation says. Nonetheless, in a case of high alert or critical situation with*
5 *individual protection it could be lowered to level 3, although it is harder."*

6 If efforts had been made, Excalibur could have been quarantined. However, attending to all the
7 making of Excalibur as/at risk, and not just to the possibilities of quarantining him, his death was, in a
8 sense, unavoidable. After the long-term policies of austerity, bringing the priests, the fast
9 preparedness that health workers had to go through, and the series of communication failures from
10 the government, taking more risks was too risky. Excalibur, at home, had been put at risk by too
11 many layers of Ebola 'production', making his death almost unavoidable. On April 26 of 2017,
12 *Elpais.com* published the sentence of the Madrid Court denying the petition of economic
13 compensation for Excalibur's companions:

14 *"Given the lack of scientific knowledge on prevention and management of the Ebola*
15 *virus in general, and about the infection and potential risk of transmission in dogs, its*
16 *sacrifice was unavoidable."*

17 Despite the lack of possibilities for extending the life of Excalibur, his killing demanded imaginative
18 enactments. In the afternoon of October 8, the elimination team arrived at Excalibur's house while
19 the crowd outside tried to stop their entrance without success, producing confrontations with the
20 police, cries, screams, insults, and two injured bodies. One year later, the experts in charge of
21 Excalibur's killing published their *silenced* actuation (VISAVET 2015). In their report, the

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veterinarians explained the design of Excalibur's killing. They had to first classify him as 'potentially dangerous' following the Spanish regulations of dog physiology (RD 287/2002. Annex II). With that premise, they designed three devices for attending to a possibly aggressive dog. First, a protective shield that was not needed because Excalibur was friendly; second, a portable access system to enter the house which provided a barrier from the dog, which they realised once inside was larger than the house corridors and hence could not be used. And third, a container for the corpse.

Adapting to the failed barrier device, veterinarians created a clean, dirty, and intermediate area by separating the structure of the building with safe curtains and assigning different equipment to the teams in each area (VISAVET 2015). Those who entered the house, first shot a sedative injection made of tiletamine-zolazepam that left Excalibur unconscious and then entered the house to inject lethal pentobarbital sodium into the dog's heart. After that, his corpse was placed in four 500-gauge bags that were closed within the dirty area then put into a two-layered medical sealed bag, sealed once more in the intermediate area and finally, in the clean area, put into the container for transportation. He was then burnt in a private crematorium instead of the biosafety centre and his ashes placed in a wooden case with his name on.

The intervention was ethical for the veterinarians: the two-step injections precluded the dog's suffering and protected human health, 'the ultimate goal of the veterinarian profession' (VISAVET, 2015: 18). This kind of ethics follows the utilitarian logics of the 'greatest good' possible, in this case humanity, and preclude responsible action by creating protocols that abstract the ethical decision from the situation (Haraway, 2008). Following Haraway, responsibility does not consist in 'fulfilling' guidelines, but rather on deciding and responding to every situation and subject of death and

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1 suffering (Haraway, 2008). It is what demonstrating Excalibur did. Neither does responsibility
2 consists of blaming others, whether scientists, the state, or individuals, for the causes or consequences
3 of risky events. It is what happened after the event with several accusations: directed at the Health
4 Councillor of Madrid for not complying with the law that requires diagnosis before killing domestic
5 animals, or towards those who cared and humanised 'just one dog.' As the multiple situations
6 described in this paper show, the death of Excalibur was distributed across multiple actors, times,
7 spaces, and practices.

8 The killing could be interpreted as a biopolitical intervention aimed at protecting the general
9 population, emphasising the lives to be saved while disavowing those sacrificed. Still, something
10 more than biopolitics was made. Despret argues in 'K, for Killing' (2016) that the use of animal
11 deaths to support animalist causes still reproduces the 'ontological rupture' that divides humans and
12 nonhumans even when dead. While animals are carcasses and corpses, she argues, humans are
13 appropriated within subject relations, either by those who care for them or those who care for the
14 causes of their deaths (Despret, 2016). Once again, this case challenged this rupture. Excalibur as a
15 quasi-subject was highly demonstrated, memorialised, politicised, and individualised, even when
16 dead. Excalibur's life was never 'bare life' (Agamben, 1998: 6), or life that is reduced to its mere
17 biological conditions. On the contrary, he was a highly political body as/at risk. Not only was his
18 life an object of multiple forms of governance and bonding but so was his death: Excalibur was at
19 one and the same time sacrificed, shot, euthanised, killed, destroyed, eliminated and murdered. One
20 year after his killing, on October 8, 2015, *Elpais.com* published an article acknowledging the
21 demonstrations that memorialised Excalibur with the words 'Excalibur, we don't forget you,' and
22 asked for a maximum level animal biosecurity centre. One year later, Excalibur was still a quasi-

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subject of politics whose death generated possibilities for change in form of infrastructures that respond better to *others* like him.

Discussion

I have discussed four ways of producing Excalibur as/at risk: cutting him, and the production of risk by the policies of austerity; relativizing him, and the challenges of living and dying together in more-than-human families; demonstrating him, and the possibilities of knowing and bonding with the other; and killing Excalibur, and the mattering of dead subjects within biosecurity interventions.

The special position of Excalibur as a quasi-subject allows for this case to question the reduction of life to its mere biological conditions or 'bare life' (Agamben, 1998) that the social studies of biosecurity tend to reproduce. As a quasi-subject, its mobilisation as a risk and at risk, Excalibur's life and death promoted new forms of understanding biosecurity beyond the biopolitics that make life as either valuable and protectable or disposable and risky. As Derrida and Rancière have argued, focusing on individuals is one way to challenge our existence as species by showing how those classifications are always exceeded (Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero, 2009: 4). Moreover, Excalibur's death illuminates how killing within biosecurity interventions is always 'killing someone, not just something' (Haraway, 2008: 93). For that reason, social studies of biosecurity would benefit from attending not just to the practices and knowledges of risk, but also to who are involved in living and dying with risk.

Future research should attend to the meanings of care within biosecurity, or what I have called 'biocare'. Because care is always conditional and only for some, we need to think how responsibility is enacted beyond the frames of our own knowledge contexts and learn to inhabit borderlands (Hinchliffe et al., 2017: 135). During the demonstrations, some citizens stated that they would

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1 quarantine Excalibur at their own expense. Through biocare, they stressed how risk and bonding
2 also bring practices of commonality. Biocare demands not only knowledge, but also 'loving
3 ignorance' (Davis, 2002; Tuana, 2006) and risk taking as a way of pursuing interspecies biosecurity
4 justice, or the possibilities of *others* to not only be framed as risk, but also at risk.

5 I conclude by referring to the speculative death that opened this article. I ask the reader to
6 acknowledge the difficulties faced by the author to respond in sensible ways to Excalibur's life and
7 death after the event. After several experiments, I found speculation one of the many ways to
8 imaginatively engage with the practices of killing and dying together in risky worlds and, specifically,
9 with Excalibur. His speculative death does not aim to produce sensationalist forms of mercy, but
10 rather to seek 'fingery eyes' (Haraway, 2008: 287), or embodied reactions to promote curiosity for
11 the other; in this case, to displace the making of carcasses and to take life, death, and the other,
12 seriously. Speculation, metonymy, responsibility, and biocare, are all practices that inhabit
13 borderlands to reconstitute the norms of defence and separation. In that sense, they are all practices
14 of interspecies biosecurity justice that encounter the other in various forms, but which are never total.

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[1] Although zoonosis refers to both sides, animals to humans and the other way around, most of the studies only consider transmissions from animals to humans. Nonetheless, the term zoonosis was coined by Rudolf Virchow (1821–1902), who also inspired the movement One Health to better understand epidemics by approaching health without the animal-human division that separates medicine from veterinarian sciences (Braidottti, 2013: 161).

[2] Literal translation from a Spanish idiom: 'the dog is dead, the rabies is finished', which means 'to attack the root of a problem'. Rabies, in Spanish *rabia*, refers to both the virus and a state of rage.

[3] For a gallery of pictures: Emma Glanfield and Ted Thornhill, 'Viva Excalibur! Dogs (with a little help) tweet pictures in campaign to save Spanish Ebola pooch… but have they done enough to save him as authorities take him away?',

October 7, 2014, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2784430/Viva-Excalibur-Dogs-little-help-tweet-pictures-campaign-save-fellow-pooch-threatened-death-Spanish-owner-Ebola.html

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