

*DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE
OF NATURECULTURES
ECCOCRITICAL OBSERVATIONS OF
PEKKA JYLHÄ'S HARE WORKS*

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*Pekka Jylhä:
'Trembling
and Honouring',
stuffed hare, milk,
glass, motor, 2005,
photo: Ari Karttunen*

Finnish sculptor Pekka Jylhä's hare works are peculiar mixtures of artificial and organic material, cultural meanings and traces of animal life. From a joined ecocritical-posthumanist perspective, the manifold meanings of these works can be traced to the problematic relationship between nature and culture. The metaphor of rabbit hole signifies a transition to a world where both humans and non-humans have agency in arts, politics and social life.

A WHITE LONG-EARED HARE, standing on its hind legs, holds a transparent glass plate containing light-coloured liquid in its front paws. The hare trembles at a steady and rapid rate, making a slight whirr. The trembler resembles a genuine mountain hare: its body and expression are those of a hare but its posture and movement are from humans and machines. I watch the white hare, a hybrid in which organic and industrial materials and non-human and human postures mix into something of whose presence and meaning it is impossible to say anything certain.

In several of sculptor Pekka Jylhä's (1955) works from the 2000s, the central element is a stuffed mountain hare (*Lepus timidus*) in its winter coat, which the artist presents with various objects such as a mirror, a basin, a string of pearls, a cloth or a candle. The work described above is titled *Trembling and Honouring* (2005). Its media are a stuffed hare, milk, glass and an electric motor, and its dimensions are 40 × 25 × 30 cm.

Jylhä's works transpose a being from what we consider nature to a profoundly cultural context. Taxidermy has been used to imitate the posture of a human holding an object designed and manufactured for some human need and use. In addition to such objects, the works often include a technological element: a motor that creates movement. As a part of an artwork, the hare is at least to a degree illuminated with artificial light and placed in a built, architectonic museum environment and in the emphatically cultural context of the other works of art surrounding it. Yet the expressions, bodies, postures and overall physical appearances of Jylhä's hares are also animal: they belong to nature, and recognised as real stuffed hares they introduce a sense of non-human life into the works. Physically, the works would not exist without the genuine hares (without the individual corporality of the hares and without their life-world and the continuity of their generations) and they would not have the same meaning as the stuffed hares; they would be semiotically different. All that we know about hares becomes part of the works and the meaning of the works is also enriched by what we do not know about them: their non-human, hare-like otherness.

Questions about the naturalness and culturalness of the animals in Jylhä's works and, in a more limited sense,

their non-human corporality and its meanings, are the focal point of this article. I will examine Pekka Jylhä's hare works from an ecocritical point of view. The metaphor of the rabbit hole in the title is a reference to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865). It means a transition to a place where familiar rules no longer apply. Ecocriticism, which examines the boundaries of nature and culture and the crossing of that border, and posthumanism, which is a critique of the superiority of humanity and cultural reality, constitute an intellectual position or location where we also have to re-orient ourselves and learn the rules of a new world. Hence artistic authorship or agency, for example, no longer belongs to people alone. Instead, the reality of an artwork is always in part made possible by non-human contribution. On the other hand, by raising the issue of non-human rights, the ecocritical and the posthumanist points of view force us to ask whether a dead animal can possess authorship and what are the ethical issues raised by deceased or absent authorship.

As a background to my article, I will discuss the current situation in ecocritical and posthumanist theory and art research and then examine Pekka Jylhä's works *I Would Like to Understand* (2000–2001), *Tear Dryer* (2003) and *Trembling and Honouring* (2005) and the limits and confluences that appear in them.¹ I will analyse potential interpretations of these works, with a particular focus on the stuffed hares and their corporality, which I will conceptualise as naturalcultural corporality. My ideas concerning the naturalcultural corporality of Jylhä's hares are not based on the study of art history. Instead, they are a thought experiment arising from a philosophical interest in understanding art where dead animals play a central role. Theoretically, this article is founded particularly on the views of the feminist philosopher Donna Haraway, who specialises in the philosophy of science, and the environmental philosopher Timothy Morton, also known for his works on English literature.

NATURE AND CULTURE – FROM DIFFERENTIATION TO UNION

It is very difficult to imagine art or, in a wider sense, visual or sculptural performances without natural materials

1. These works by Jylhä were included in the *Arctic Hysteria* exhibition of Finnish art from the 2000s, which was shown in several Finnish cities and in New York and Budapest in 2008–2009.

and subjects. Brushes made with animal hair, paints mixed from organic materials and wood and stone suitable for sculpture are physical matter with which plant, animal and landscape subjects are immortalised as ornaments, cult objects and works of art. Hence the relationship between art and culture can be thought of as a basic element in art, although it can mean very different things in different places and at different times (see for example Lähde 2012).² The questions we pose today about the relationship between the non-human world or the natural environment and culture or art are not, however, very old or universal. Awareness of the vulnerability of the environment and the consequences and potential of human action, generated by industrialisation, urbanisation, technological progress and highly

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specialised natural sciences, lays the foundation, I believe, for all discussion concerning the relationship between non-human nature and culture or art.

Since the 1980s, the relationship between nature and cultural texts about nature has been structured by ideas which today are called ecocritical and posthumanist. Ecocriticism originally developed as a tool for the classification, history and analysis of nature writing in the United States and the United Kingdom but with general presentations published in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, it has broadened into a global academic trend which deals with not only literature but other cultural texts such as advertisements, films and also music and art (Glotfelty & Fromm 1996; Kerridge & Sammels 1998; Coupe 2000; Love 2003; Garrard 2004). Posthumanism, on the other hand, is a less distinct reference to philosophers who question the heritage of rationalist humanism and seek alternative, non-essentialist and non-hierarchical ways of understanding the relationships between humans, non-human animals and machines (Wolfe 2010).

In recent years, ecocritical academics have moved forward from issues dealing with the presentation of nature and ideas of nature represented in nature writing (and their historical causes and ideological and concrete effects) to artistic and philosophical questions where the separation of nature and culture itself is criticised. This has brought ecocritical and posthumanist thinking closer to each other and it is no longer a simple matter to clearly distinguish them. Since the theories, concepts and even methods of the academics in question are multi- and even cross-disciplinary to varying degrees,

and the scientific and philosophical research is often closely related to artistic activity, current critical work on the relationship between nature and culture can justifiably be considered scientific-artistic.

Moreover, the need to restructure the relationship between nature and culture is strongly ethical and political. An indication of this is the discussion on the rights of non-humans and radical democracy that began in the 1990s and became widespread in the 2000s. The theoretical issue has been discussed by for example Catriona Sandilands (1995) and Bruno Latour (2004) and in Finland by Ilmo Massa (2012). In Finnish art, Terike Haapoja's *The Party of Others* (2011) is at once a symbolical gesture and concrete action to include non-humans in political decision-making. Politics or the organisation of common life could in future take place outside the nature–culture division, without the linguistic subjectivity required for political action. Yet now, as we are experiencing the sixth global wave of extinction, a fall in biodiversity and climate change, non-human beings, processes and ecosystems still need humans to represent them (see Haapoja 2011; Latour 2004, 32–41; 62–87).

But what are we actually talking about when we talk about the concepts of nature and culture? At its simplest, culture can be defined as something made or altered by humans, whereas nature is independent of humans and their actions (e.g. Soper 1995, 15). While this division is contrived and problematic – think of cereals and pedigree dogs and genetically manipulated test animals – we rely on it even when we deny it, as the philosopher Kate Soper (1995, 15, 39) has so aptly pointed out. Conceptually, the difference between nature and culture is characterized by the following (for other similar definitions, see e.g. Soper 1995; Haraway 2003; Lähde 2012):

nature vs. culture

organism vs. machine

organic vs. artificial

raw material vs. product

matter vs. meaning

meaningless vs. meaningful.

For contemporary art, philosophy and research, such opposition no longer seems valid. The concepts of nature and culture have already been mixed in ecocritical and posthumanist debate as *naturecultures* (Haraway 1997, 2008; Latour 2004). Reality is understood here as various overlapping beings, things or areas understood as natural and cultural: think of reindeer husbandry or nature travel, for example. The division between organisms and machines has already been crossed by the concepts *cyborg* and *chimera*, for example, which are not just science fiction but metaphors for what we are as bodies that have already been improved upon by technological progress (Haraway 1997, 2003). The binarisms between organic and artificial and between raw-material and product are given release in art, which makes use of organic beings, tissues and cells, biological processes and the input of non-human actors in the creation of art

² Other fundamental ways of lending structure include conceptualisations based on creativity, skill and intention.



*Pekka Jylhä:
'Tear Dryer',
(detail), cloth,
stuffed hare, water,
aluminium, 2003*

works. Bio Art³, which uses biotechnologies, Taxidermic Art⁴ which rebuilds stuffed animals and animal parts and works given to animals to paint or finalise and joint performances by animals and humans⁵ are examples of activities where the elements cannot be simply considered either natural or cultural.

The separation between matter and meaning has been criticised especially in science studies, where scientific innovations are said to influence the constitution of organisms and material observations to affect the conceptualisations of material phenomena and beings (Latour 1999). Things are both material and meaningful or *material-semiotic* (Haraway 1997). In art that focuses on the relationship between nature and culture, the division into nature that has no meaning as such and

Transposed into works of art, the hare's bodies carry features that are not solely physical or linguistic-conceptual.

nature for which meaning has been made through presenting and performing is also important (Morton 2007). This last division is the least discussed and conceptualised, and crossing it may also prove the most challenging. Must nature be enclosed within culture to have meaning –how could something like bird song become art (compare Rothenberg 2005)?

In Jylhä's *Trembling and Honouring*, the stuffed hare offers viewers a plate of milk, trembling like a machine at non-animal speed. The neutral expression of the animal and its human-like posture frozen in tremor make it un-animal-like and yet the viewers believe their eyes and

3. In recent years, Bio Art has attracted considerable attention because it employs the latest genetic engineering technologies and other bio technical innovations (see for example Thacker 2003; Rifkin 2003). One of the most famous works of Bio Art is Eduardo Kac's *GFP Bunny* (2000), which comprises an albino rabbit with genetic material from a jellyfish which makes it glow green, the public debate about the rabbit, named Alba, and accepting the rabbit as part of the art and scientific world as a social community (web source). In Finland, bio artists have formed the Finnish Bioart Society, which is based at Kaapelitehdas, Helsinki, and has a residency in the Kilpisjärvi Biological Station of University of Helsinki (web source).

4. Artists working in Taxidermy Art include Julia deVille, Lisa Black and Juan Cabana, of whom the first two use stuffed animals to make jewellery and apparel. In Finland, Leena Pukki, Karoliina Paappa, Lari Lähti and Stina Riikonen work in Taxidermy Art. Their project *Route Couture* (web source) deals with the ethics of the fur industry by making clothing out of the skins of roadkills. Taxidermy has also become a commercial phenomenon. The Scottish brewery BrewDog launched a beer called *The End of History* last year and bottles it in glass bottles covered in the carcasses of squirrels and stoats so that the mouth of the bottle protrudes from that of the animals (web source).

5. Such works include Coyote: *I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974) by Joseph Beuys and a coyote, and paintings made by the painter Thierry Lenain and the chimp Kunda. The philosopher Steve Baker analyses these and many other artworks associated with animals and animal agency in his article *Sloughing the Human* (2003).

see a mountain hare. The hare surpasses the opposition between nature and culture in all of the senses I have presented above. It is a mechanised organism and a man-made being created by nature. Its body is both raw material and a finished product and its meaning is in its hare-materialness. The tug-of-war between 'meaningless' and 'meaningful' is also crystallised by the hare holding the plate of milk: through its posture and condition, the hare rises from the anonymity of a natural being into a being with a specific purpose and meaning. It seems to be offering the milk to us; the title of the piece, *Trembling and Honouring*, is of course an important part of the interpretation. Are we given a sacrifice of milk and from which mammal is the milk? The milk milked into the vessel, a source of growth and a primal food, repeats the white colouring of the hare and its organic origin. As in Jylhä's other hare works, there is a strange sense of transition: where did the hare and the milk come from and how did they change in the process? These questions can be posed on two levels; the history of the work (how it was made) and its meaning (what does it mean). Both lead the viewer of Jylhä's hares into the rabbit hole of naturecultures.

NATURALCULTURAL CORPORALITY

In the piece *Tear Dryer* (2003), narrow trails of water flow along a large circular mirror, three metres across, and there is a clear, round object above the mirror, like a bowl of water or an unnaturally round droplet. At floor level, there is a white hare that touches the mirror with a white cloth, its reflection seen in the mirror. The hare is frozen in the middle of a drying movement. The animal, however, wears the same basic hare expression that does not seem to portray any emotion. The title suggests that the animal brings comfort, that it will dry your tears. An animal that does not express its sorrow by crying and cannot even really produce tears, has been placed in front of a mirror to dry tears flowing from some unknown source. A mountain hare, at the bottom end of the food chain, often the victim of traffic or hunters, is an expressionless but dedicated comforter, in whose front paw the cloth fits with chilling ease.

Our knowledge, ideas and beliefs about hares are intertwined with the piece. The stuffed mountain hare is loaded with the unknown and unwritten life story of the individual animal and the secrets of the species' way of life and lifeworld. They, too, matter when we ask what this hare means. But above all else, we look at the stuffed hare as a representative of its species, a universal mountain hare that to us represents timidity and alertness, a strong reproductive instinct and constant readiness to mate, and the sympathy we have for prey but without the charisma of a predator. The white colouring of the mountain hare in its winter coat, the soft tips of its paws, protected by long hairs, and the wide field of vision of its large eyes set at the sides of its head are like



*Pekka Jylhä:
'I Would Like to
Understand', stuffed
hare, stainless steel,
pump, rotating water,
2000–01*

physical counterparts for its timidity and sympathetic nature and even a certain victimhood as well. These long-eared bodies are familiar sights along highways, often grotesquely posed, and for some viewers from the larder as well. We kill and eat these animals.

Transposed into works of art, the hare's bodies carry features that are not solely physical or linguistic-conceptual. To quote Haraway, their bodies are material-semiotic: material and meaningful at the same time. According to Haraway, things that we consider part of the material world such as atoms and molecules are never only matter but elements of the world and of our world view to which various tropes and figures of speech lend meaning. Correspondingly, concepts such as biological species have emerged from specific historical contexts, made possible by specific material conditions and have different concrete effects. (Haraway 1997, 55–56, 129, 142, 190.) Hence Haraway's material-semiotic refers to the historicity and conditionality of knowledge, concepts and the targets of knowledge. It is about the material and symbolic connections and links between our ways of understanding the world: bodies are meaningful and meanings are bodily, and even the whitest of hares in the whitest and simplest of surroundings are never empty to us. Hence nature and culture mix in the bodies of the hares not only physically (glass eyes and taxidermic materials under organic hair and skin) but also semiotically: the timidity and alertness that are crucial for the survival of individuals and populations become the characteristics of the underdog and even the victim or scapegoat in our ideas about the hare.

The naturalcultural corporality of Jylhä's hares is at once about material and semiotic or physical and meaning-related phenomena, which are always already mixed in our reasoning. Following these conceptualisations (naturalcultural, material-semiotic) it would be possible to proceed to interpret the hares in Jylhä's works as artistic symbols (of say innocence, victimhood or humility) or from the perspective of anthropomorphism (how they are positioned to hold and use man-made objects). However, the problem of the naturalcultural body reaches deeper because we are aware of the history of the work or of how and from what it has been made. The physical hares are from nature or from the subset of reality through which history has demanded different conceptualisations, concepts of nature (after all, naturecultures is just another way of conceptualising the relationship between nature and culture). The biological and ecological origin of the animals invite us to consider their meaning as such: hares as hares.

Timothy Morton (2007), a literary scholar critical of the principles of ecocritical research, has drawn attention to the relationship of non-human nature to culture as an area of meaning-making: non-human must be made to have meaning in a cultural sense – nature has to be enclosed within culture – to become understood. According to Morton, art that deals with nature attempts to bring nature to the viewer, reader or listener as something that has meaning but is nevertheless immediate, like nature itself. He calls environmental art ecomimesis; it is art which seeks to deny its own 'artness.'

According to Morton (2007, 31), ecomimesis seeks to position itself above or outside of art. This illusory naturalness is the next challenge with Jylhä's hares: is it possible to see hares as hares?

Like the *Tear Dryer*, the piece *I Would Like to Understand* (2000–2001) includes a large reflective surface. It is a flat steel vessel 2.5 metres across with rippling water in it. Light is reflected from the surface of the vessel and the water, making it difficult to tell how deep the water is. At the side of the vessel there is a hare, standing on its hind legs and resting its front legs on the edge of the vessel, its gaze turned to the vessel but not really at it. The hare's gaze is directed across the surface of the water so that if you stand on the opposite side, the hare seems to be looking into your eyes. The title *I Would Like to Understand* can easily be interpreted as spoken by the hare. The encounter of the hare-object, the water element and the steel vessel readily becomes metaphorical: perhaps the animal has been elevated in the piece above its immediate hare lifeworld, where it suspects that in reality there is something it could understand. It may be thinking that reacting and problem-solving are not the only way to exist in the world and

time (see Ruonakoski 2011, 167–168). This of course applies only to a live animal and not to a stuffed hare-object with glass eyes.

That Jylhä has decided to use the hare in his works is interesting, because usually the only thing we see of a live hare are the movements of becoming aware, detecting and fleeing. In the case of a stuffed hare, the animal becomes a total subject of our gaze. We can take our time observing its paws and nose, close up and as long as we like. On the other hand, having seen other dead animals and humans as well, we know that there is very little left of the living individual, if anything at all, in a dead body or matter. An individual exists in its expressions, movements, gestures, approaches and withdrawals, the rhythms and sounds of its limbs and breathing, the sounds it makes and/or the words it utters and the action it takes. Materially, a stuffed hare is still half nature (its hair and body) and half man-made (stuffing, posture, glass eyes). Semiotically, the hare can be anything but not a hare (hare to itself, hare in the hare lifeworld). This is where a gap between the meaningful and the meaningless associated with the nature–culture division opens: the hare to itself or the hare in the hare lifeworld remains unattainable to the human in a cultural sense.

According to Timothy Morton, ecomimesis seeks to dispel the strangeness associated with the non-human and to create that experience of a non-human environment we can sense immediately. In his book *Ecology without Nature* (2007), Morton discusses the methods of ecomimesis, which he calls the poetics of ambience (see also Lummaa 2010). The poetics of ambience comprises a dual movement: on the one hand it creates an illusion of the environment but on the other hand it also makes its illusory nature obvious (Morton 2007, 68–71). The central device of the poetics of ambience is the re-mark, which raises the object from its background and makes meaning for it in a particular way. Morton uses *Peanuts* to illustrate the re-mark. Snoopy's bird-friend Woodstock speaks with small vertical lines in *Peanuts*. Morton says that although we do not know what it says, we know that it is speaking. The speech bubbles with the tiny slashes are a re-mark which allows us to understand the signs referring to the bird's speech as meaningful. In its subtlety, a re-mark may go un-noticed by the recipient when, for example, a cleaner destroys an installation in a museum made with paint cans and brushes. (Morton 2007, 47–52.)

Inside a text or an artwork, a re-mark distinguishes the foreground from the background. Crucial in Morton's concept of the re-mark is, however, its ideological aspect, which transfers the problem concerning the articulation of meaning outside the text. A key pair of concepts used by Morton is inside-outside, where inside means cultural, that which falls within the sphere of human activity and is therefore meaningful, and outside means non-cultural, that which falls without the sphere of human activity and is therefore meaningless. The

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that the world as a whole can be subject to its understanding.

On the other hand, the will to understand also applies to the viewer, who may take a position eye to eye with the hare, leaving a vast reflective surface between them, the composition of which is not easy to grasp. Where does steel meet water, where is the water's surface and the air above it (which only the viewer breathes, the hare after all is lifeless)? The surface reflects the problem of the gaze between the human and the hare: eye contact with the hare is nearly impossible to interpret. In his essay *Why look at animals?* (1980) John Berger analyses the gazes of people and animals. In mutual gaze, we humans recognise in the animals' eyes our way of looking at our surroundings. The alertness of the animal gaze is familiar to us and hence makes the animal familiar, too, while it still remains strange. (Berger 1980, 2–3.) Looking a live mountain hare in the eye, I can only guess at its thoughts, which of course also applies to how the hare sees and understands my gaze. In most cases the visual contact passes in the blink of an eye as the hare takes off and flees, but if the contact is sustained for any length of time, it is certain that the hare, in one way or another, orientates to the human at that

subject is this, here or the inside, and the object is that, there or the outside. (Morton 2007, 64.) Like other devices of the poetics of ambience, the re-mark is associated with the simulation of nature. The re-mark constructs an impression of a surrounding by creating an illusion of being able to exist between the inside or meaningful and the outside or meaningless, where everything is meaningful but nothing stands out as an object for which meaning has been made. Morton's ambience refers to the illusion that we can be on the border between human and non-human and experience hares as something that are un-like us but still understandable to us. (Morton 2007, 52–54.)

According to Morton, the impression created by the re-mark of the conflation of the foreground and background and of crossing the division between the inside and the outside is in the end merely an illusion created by the poetics of ambience. Re-mark is never gradual: the division between the foreground and the background is always total (Morton 2007, 50). Black figures become letters, a soundscape gains a structure of rhythms and movement becomes expressive. Paint cans and brushes become an installation and vertical dashes become Woodstock's speech. When the foreground is differentiated, an end point is reached in the depiction of the non-human. It is a closure through which the depicted is shown in a particular meaning. This means that the non-human and the external are unattainable: we cannot present the non-human as non-human, the hare as a hare. The division between the outside and the inside solidifies and everything that is depicted is enclosed in the inside, in the sphere of cultural meaning-making.

According to Morton's theory of ecomimesis, whether the hare is dead and stuffed or alive, it would seem that as a part of an artwork its meaning is completely cultural and internal: the hare of art is a non-hare. What happened to the nature of naturecultures?

HOW DEEP DOES THE RABBIT HOLE GO?

What I have written above about Morton's re-mark applies to artworks (music, literature, paintings, sculptures, installations). As is inferred by the ideological aspect associated with the re-mark concerning the outside or nature and the inside or culture, the re-mark is not merely an aesthetic concept. According to Morton, understanding the way re-mark functions means grasping how the inside and the outside are just a construction, a way to conceptualise our relationship with the non-human. In the quote below, Morton discusses the idea that the inside and the outside are simply our way to understand reality. There is no real justification for this division or crossing it, but it nevertheless permeates our thinking:

None of this is to claim that inside and outside "really" exist. In fact, understanding the re-mark means radically questioning the genuine existence of these categories, far more than clinging to an aesthetic amalgam of the two, especially a "new and improved" version, such as ambience. Ambience suggests that there is a special kind of noise-sound, or sound-noise; a noise that is also a sound, a sound that is also a noise. Somehow, however, we can still tell the difference between the two. Somewhere that is *both* inside and outside suffers from this wish to have it both ways. – Morton 2007, 54.

In other words, we should in some way be conscious of the artificial nature of the inside and outside as categories without dispelling the meaningful division between human and non-human. Our way of categorising non-human beings as borderline is linked in Morton's texts with our inability to relate to non-human otherness as an ethically and politically meaningful otherness (on the meaning of otherness and difference, see Morton 2007, 151):

*Semiotically,
a stuffed hare can be
anything but not a hare
(hare to itself, hare in
the hare lifeworld).*

But because of the logic of the re-mark, such spaces, whether they are outside or inside our heads, embody what is, at bottom, illusory. I mean here to support these margins. As a matter of urgency, we just *cannot* go on thinking of them as “in between”. We must choose to include them on this side of human social practices, to factor them in to our political and ethical decisions. As Bruno Latour states, “Political philosophy ... finds itself confronted with the obligation to *internalize* the environment that it had viewed up to now as another world.” – Morton 2007, 51.

We cannot cross the dividing line between the inside and the outside, the human and the non-human and the cultural and that which is outside the cultural because it is a dividing line that is fundamental to the way we think and on which other divisions are founded (Morton 2007, 191, see also 145, 151). By separating the inside from the outside and dispelling the separation, the re-mark allows us to perceive different forms of life through the divisions. In the end, however, the divisions are always constructs. In physical reality such divisions do not exist. As Morton says, referring to Latour, to solve our environmental problems, we have to make non-human life forms part of our reality, make them our problem (see Latour 2004). In the future, politics and practices will require that we consider the non-human outside as meaningful *and still* non-human (Morton 2007, 204–205; see also Haapoja 2011). Hence it is not trivial to ask whether the mountain hares in Jylhä’s works were killed or found dead. While the right to kill for artistic or other human purposes is not the topic of this article, the question must nevertheless be asked.

Including the non-human in communities and political life that have thus far remained purely human will also mean recognition of non-human agency. Jylhä’s hare works would not exist without hares! Usually the agency of an animal is not intentional: non-human agency is more often about positions from where one can influence the world as a moving and living body, through emotional reactions, individual behaviour or original physical corporality. Thus the hare-like, material-semiotic quality of hares is critical to the interpretation of Jylhä’s works. Moreover, while the play between the meaningless and the meaningful instigated by the re-mark remains an open, constantly disturbing and fascinating semiotic movement, the movement in itself is included in the semiotic aspect of the mountain hares. Now it is a hare, now a victim; now a hare, now a metaphor for non-human otherness, and so on. As individuals and populations, mountain hares must not vanish in the background of these semiotic movements. Instead, they must rise to the foreground as actors that make the experience possible. This is our responsibility.

The film *Matrix* by Andy and Lana Wachowski reinterprets the rabbit hole from *Alice in Wonderland* when Morpheus offers Neo two capsules, one of which will wipe clear his memories and the other help him comprehend the depth of the rabbit hole or the all-encompassing

nature of the simulated normal world we are fed. Falling into the rabbit hole and passing through it means seeing reality in all its unexpectedness. Ecocritical and especially posthumanist thought leads to a hole where the ideas and practices related to the non-human are analysed and taken apart to build another *common* world that operates on different rules.

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Translated from Finnish by David Miller

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Pekka Jylhä:
‘It is not too late’,
stuffed hare, light,
2009

*To solve our environmental problems,
we have to make non-human life forms
part of our reality, make them our problem.*

