Violently meeting in the emptiness: Drafting sharing skins

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Keywords: more than humans, wolves, violence, welfare, Spain
Abstract:
This artistic contribution has to do with the open debate (and “drafting of positions”) on current changes in the legal protection of wolves in Spain as an expression of:

• The deep conflict (sometimes violent) between the rural interests and the urban fascination for these animals who kill other animals.
• How wolves symbolise our capacity to share the world with other forms of life, also dangerous, beyond consumption, and to change our habits.
• And how initiatives for deep listening and understanding between different human and non-human animals in conflict perhaps in the intersections of knowledge between rural and green criminologies, can be done through critical thinking, avoiding humiliation or urban superiorities.

At the same time, as explained in the final note, we play with the socio-legal notions of “emptied Spain”, glocalisation and “pack” in violence against women. All these different ideas are wrapped within a final vision of restorative justice.

The work combines three illustrations by three different artists and a text envisaged as poetic prose.

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1 Text by Gema Varona (Basque Institute of Criminology, University of the Basque Country). Illustrations by two generations of artists: Carlos Arruti (http://maushaus.info/) (Drawing 1), Carlos Varona (Drawing 2) and an anonymous artist (Drawing 3). Providing a common understanding of values in conflict, the three artists worked autonomously to foster diverse visual interpretations and extend that diversity to readers’ ideas and imagination.

History and stories: Rural communities, actual suffering and legendary tales about wolves that eat children and sheep.

2021: The pandemic continues showing human vulnerability, particularly in crowded areas. Rural spaces appear to be safer.

2021: Under the name of "emptied Spain", rural world protests go back to the capital city.

2021: A new regulation prohibiting hunting wolves in all Spanish territory is expected.
Conflicting humans say to defend life: the life of innocent lambs, of guard dogs, of wolves, the economy of farmers, the pleasure (some say need) for hunting, biodiversity... Opposing interests emerge from different basic instincts, ethical values and sophisticated legal terms for the management of endangered populations. What life is not endangered under climate change? How to interpret harm justified as the protection of different ways of living?

Human and non-human animals’ conflicts, predators and victims, aggressions and violence over a rural space that is called “emptied”, urban technocrats avoiding listening to all voices, and humans speaking in the name of wolves, once symbols of fearful cruelty and today symbols of beauty and freedom for those living in the city.

Contradictions and absences in our collective memory: the threatening “pack”, used as a metaphor of violence against women in urban and rural areas, and yet the images of the caring wolves in The Jungle Book and the spiritual stories of some First Nations. In different parts of the world, again, we are simultaneously able to attack and care for wildlife and human beings.
And then, is it too utopian to think of restorative futures? Urban wolves, rural humans, *homo homini lupus est*. Perhaps, for once, looking at each other and exchanging skins does not mean cheating and threatening, but breaking rooted frontiers for a complex encounter of species, human responsibilities, creative pathways, and different ways of being. Many tales on the rural and the urban in a glocalized world are still to be written and rewritten. In this emptiness we temporarily occupy, different howls and voices might question the monologue of human violence in the Anthropocene.
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How to cite this article (APA– 7th ed.): Varona, G. (2022). Violently meeting in the emptiness: Drafting sharing skins. Criminological Encounters, 5(1), 204-209. https://doi.org/10.26395/CE2205014