

La mirada animal en “Axolotl” de Julio Cortázar (The Animal Gaze in Julio Cortázar’s “Axolotl”)

Fernando Valerio-Holguín¹

In his essay “Why Look at Animals?,” John Berger states that in the first encounter between a human and an animal, the latter's eyes are attentive and wary. The animal looks at the human from the abyss of incomprehension. The human becomes aware of himself by looking back at the animal, who is the radical Other. If the abyss of otherness between humans can be bridged through language, this is impossible between the human and the animal. The gaze is the only possibility for the human to “descend” to the animal. Julio Cortázar wrote “Axolotl,” which tells the story of a man who, fascinated by the axolotls, goes to the Jardin des Plantes aquarium in Paris every day to observe them and ends up becoming one of them. Already in the first paragraph of the story, the character-narrator states: “Now I am an axolotl.” Then he adds: “His eyes above all obsessed me. Next to them in the other aquariums, various fish showed me the simple stupidity of their beautiful eyes like ours. The eyes of the axolotls told me of the presence of a different life, of another way of looking.” The narrator manages to transcend the barrier of “space and time” through the gaze and, finally, becomes an axolotl. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: journal@transformativestudies.org Website: <http://www.transformativestudies.org> ©2022 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]*

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