



Violently meeting in the emptiness: Drafting sharing skins

Gema Varona

University of the Basque Country
gemmamarca.varona@ehu.eus

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Abstract¹:

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.

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.

Explanatory note: Around 2,000–3,000 wolves live in Spain, a population increased since the 70s (<https://wolf.org/wow/europe/spain/>). In 2020 the Spanish Ministry of Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge announced the future banning of wolf hunting throughout its territory. On this topic, see del Castillo, T. F. (2021). Wolf (dis) protection in Spain: Exceptions to the rules in the Bern Convention and in The Habitats Directive as a conservation and management tool. *Revista Catalana de Dret Ambiental*, 1(1). See also the legal updates at <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/serviciosdeprensa/notasprensa/transicion-ecologica/Paginas/2021/190521-proteccionlobo.aspx>. Odile Rodríguez de la Fuente, biologist and daughter of a pioneer naturalist protecting wolves in Spain, called for an understanding of humans in conflict because of the wolf question’. She called for the need for social mediators to offer alternatives to all stakeholders, see Rodríguez de la Fuente, O. (2021). *La Gaceta de Salamanca*, 5 March 2021, <https://www.lagacetadesalamanca.es/campo/habla-la-hija-de-felix-rodriguez-de-la-fuente-mi-padre-sabia-que-conservar-el-lobo-en-contrade-la-poblacion-seria-papel-mojado-CC6631361>. Her position caused her to be attacked by some ecologists on the social networks. See, in general, cases of restorative issues in other countries, Johansson, M., Flykt, A., Frank, J., & Hartig, T. (2021). Appraisals of wildlife during restorative opportunities in local natural settings. *Frontiers in Environmental Science*, 9, 1–17, <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1559105/FULLTEXT01.pdf>; and König, H. J., Ceaşu, S., Reed, M., Kendall, H., Hemminger, K., Reinke, H., et al. (2021). Integrated framework for stakeholder participation: Methods and tools for identifying and addressing human–wildlife conflicts. *Conservation Science and Practice*, 3(3), <https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdfdirect/10.1111/csp2.399>. On the concept of rural emptied Spain, see Juliani, A. (2019). *Emptied Spain: Nobody’s land, everybody’s land*, 29 March 2019, <https://www.efe.com/efe/english/infographics/emptied-spain-nobody-s-land-everybody/50000936-3940032>. Finally, on the concept of wolf pack and sexual violence against women in Spain, see <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/23/wolf-pack-case-spain-feminism-far-right-vox>.



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 homi- ni 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 respon- sibilities, creative pathways, and different ways of being. Many tales on the rural and the urban in a glocalised 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.

Gema Varona, is Professor of Criminal Policy at the Faculty of Law of Donostia/San Sebastián (University of the Basque Country). Carlos Varona is illustrator (https://www.artstation.com/carlos_varona_martinez) and Carlos Arruti an artist (<http://maushaus.info/>).

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