

Fiction

Allegory of the Alien Invasion

Lisa Kretz*

For much of human history knowledge was communicated orally. Moral understandings were shared, developed, and contextualized from generation to generation. Current moral theorists have argued that storied accounts may better serve to motivate ethical action and engage emotionally than standalone arguments. Over the years I found myself developing a story—which I spoke aloud to students in my introductory classes when we were starting work on non-human animal ethics, altering it and layering on elements year after year. Below is a written version.

It finally happened. You know all those folks claiming UFO sightings? Some of them were actually on to something. In our universe there *is* life beyond planet earth, and it finally contacted us. The first ships landed 2 years ago, and the aliens have been increasing their presence exponentially since then. They now number over 10 billion—a population even larger than humans, the dominant species hitherto. What we call the A.E. (the Alien Era) is marked by alien dominance both in terms of the power they exert over others and their numbers.

The aliens are like us in many regards, but they fail to understand our attempts at communication. They appear mammalian in physiology: they have two eyes, a vertebrate structure, and they bleed. They seem to respond to pain in ways we do and give evidence like grimacing, screaming (what an awful noise that is), and avoiding the source of pain. They have a complicated language we have not been able to decipher, and sometimes their interactions make evident that they have telepathic capacities. They have a body language they use to communicate with each other—it is similar to ours, but they refuse to recognize this similarity. They have never taken the time to observe us in our natural setting with an open mind and open heart.

There are hardly any free humans anymore. These aliens like the taste of flesh, you see, disproportionately more than that of other animals on our planet—so they pen us up and are genetically selecting the most docile and weighty of us to breed. Lactating women are milked—and when they saw what we did with veal calves they adopted the same behavior, keeping some

* Lisa Kretz can be reached at kretzl@gvsu.edu.

human children confined and anemic so that their flesh is pale and tender. Female reproductive products are an expensive delicacy that rich aliens scramble in a frying pan and eat on toast.

There is no consideration of our social relations, our family ties, our romantic desires...we are here to serve their needs and they've got us jailed in such a way we can't even successfully take our own lives to end the pain. And the domesticated humans—the humans that are alien pets—know that some of the aliens live off vegetables alone. The aliens are omnivores, and some of them just choose not to eat humans—we aren't sure precisely why because we can't understand their language. It seems that some of them are partial to treating their pet humans well, and a number of these just refuse to eat humans.

Some domesticated humans report having gone with their owners to rallies with pictures of factory farmed humans on placards and angry aliens marching the streets—some of the aliens even cry purple alien tears at the protests when they look at the pictures. They hold their domesticated humans close to their huge alien bodies with their eight yellow alien arms.

There are human game reserves where the aliens like to let groups of humans roam “wild” within large “natural landscapes” lined by electrified fences. We breed and form family units, and they come and pick us off with their lasers during hunting season to ensure we don't over-consume the existing resources. Since the most impressive human specimens are the fastest and smartest—the leaders of our social units—those are the ones they tend to kill and mount for show. As a result, natural selection no longer helps much in terms of our ability to survive in the long run. It is taken to be a showing of their alienist prowess to be able to shoot, gut, and stuff a human.

And you know they think they are better than us because they have that telepathic language going for them and find us comparatively mentally slow and brutish. And I'm guessing they take the evidence they found of humans' treatment of “lesser species” as a justification for doing the same sort of thing to us; in fact it seems as though they've adopted a lot of our technologies used for slaughtering and imprisoning non-human animals and just adapted them to slaughtering and imprisoning humans.

What I wish is that they could see it from our perspective, just for a moment. They don't need to eat us, and if they were in our shoes—if a larger, more dominant population of different aliens touched down on earth who liked the taste of *their* flesh and *their* lactating females' milk and *their* reproductive products and *their* babies—they'd hope that dominant species would act

with care, not cruelty. Just because we don't have the capacity to speak their telepathic language and aren't as intelligent and powerful as they are doesn't mean that it is right for them to do whatever they want with us. It seems one thing humans have that they don't is an understanding and valuing of moral behavior. But I guess, truth be told, when we were dominant neither did we.

Acknowledgments

My thanks to the students who inspired me to craft the story over the years, to the University of New Brunswick Saint John, which housed my research and teaching when I put the words to paper, and to Derek Wurtz and Kathryn Asher for their excellent editorial advice. I also wish to thank Grand Valley State University and the University of Evansville for their institutional support during revisions.