

(Reading Groups)

Is Rabbit Guilty?



Reading group 1

13th Dec, 2022

Goldsmiths MFA kitchen

Dog(writer): Do you think Rabbit is guilty?

Deer: Guilty

Turtle, Hummingbird: Not guilty

Penguin, Mammoth, Goose: Not sure

Deer: He is definitely guilty. I think he's guilty and the system... I don't want to bring that always as like my usual subjects. But you know, like, there was this Palestinian teenager yesterday was killed and the headlines in the West are like Palestinian teen dies on rooftop. So it doesn't tell you who killed. It didn't just suddenly die. It was killed because there was an Israeli sniper that thought she was suspicious and shot at her. It's like, who defines that? ... **Who defines narrative, of course. And who do you trust.** Because here there's this idea of like, at the end, he's acquitted in a way because we trust him. But you can also trust a system that, kills and is oppressive and all of these

things.

Turtle: Where do you think that trust or not trust that you feel comes from? I'm trying to think back to the first read. We have three versions of what happened. And two of them, he hasn't actually done action of killing. But one of them, he's sort of like saying that he's taken the action, technically. There's like two versions, empirically. Why is it that there's more trust in the guilty version than having two innocent versions? And I'm thinking about where is the distrust coming from? **I mention not wanting to blindly trust but also feel like you should be cautious about learning distrusting as well.**

Deer: But I feel that it goes bigger than him, because this is also a system of oppression, this is something that you're not allowed to do in Geneva Convention. Collective punishment, yes. So this is essentially collective punishment. This is someone that lives in a system that's oppressive. I don't know where I'm going with this point. But yeah, like this is something like lives in the system that's oppressive that practices collective punishment.

Turtle: I am really curious. If he's guilty, what was the action killing happening? How did he kill caterpillar.

Hummingbird: **You can argue that he killed him by negligence.**

Deer: Yes. And he killed him because he knew that the throne would kill him. Like he knew. Like he says that I know that he's soft. And so I just left him there. It's like, you know, leaving your baby on a balcony and being like, 'Oh, I didn't know that it could fall but he died.'

Hummingbird: I think there are several assumptions: the assumption of like vulnerability of what we are assuming to be like a caterpillar and like how much responsibility anyone else should be taking. And also the problem that you don't really know what the truth is. It's definitely negligence, but there's a certain amount of negligence and then there's willful negligence and then there's just like 'Well, fuck, I don't know,' about what a caterpillar can and cannot do, what a caterpillar does or doesn't know.

Mammoth: **There is a big question that no one knows what caterpillar's feeling.** We discussed about the rabbit. Caterpillar shows like a ghost in this novel. Maybe we can discuss what the caterpillar feels like. I think he or she, the caterpillar want to die.

Hummingbird: To be fair, I can see where that reading is coming from, especially with the whole

idea of like, death is illegal. In some countries, not every, suicide is technically illegal, but that stems from, for the most part, feel like Kant says killing yourself as morally wrong. I think a lot of it stems from like a very Christian point of view.

Turtle: Taking a life is illegal therefore in your own life It's also illegal.

Penguin: I'm questioning that because by the law the rabbit should be guilty. In the law it said if someone died its best friend or family member will be guilty. But in the first version of that story, rabbit seems like she doesn't even see the Caterpillar as her friend. Because the rabbit has tried to pretend that she kills the caterpillar accidentally.

Dog: Maybe the caterpillar is not guilty, so he has nothing to cover?

Penguin: The law is not talking about like whether the rabbit has killed the caterpillar or not, it is talking about it is your friend so you are guilty.

Turtle: I feel like the perspective is really important for each story. So like from whose perspective is the story being told isn't all, because their titles, 'the story of Prince Duck' 'the story of Black Cat.' Is it Captain Black Cat telling the story? Or is it Rabbit telling the story of his encounter with Black Cat? And if it's the latter, then we have no

reason to believe that the rabbit is lying in any one of these stories versus like the others. And therefore everything that the rabbit is explaining about what happened is true. And so that's why I'm kind of like, reluctant to just be like: because in one of the stories, he says he did it, then I distrust him. **I could easily see that being like someone like having survivor's guilt after their friend dies,** and then blaming themselves because they feel like they could have done something differently to save them. And it's like: did I secretly somewhere deep down not like that he was soft? And therefore I did all of these things? And like, it's my fault that he died. Yeah, I can see that. And so that's why I think it's really important because that completely changes this if captain black cat is telling the story, and it's not the rabbit telling the story. So I think that's really important.

Deer: And cat is kind of illustrating this perspective by telling us about how he destroyed the nest. And he ends up eating the bird in his sleep. So is this idea of like intention versus priming.

Turtle: So he's sort of laid out this sort of framework of thinking about an accident that happened. And I feel like it's also in a way colouring the mind of the rabbit as well, like, 'Oh, if this is what happened with black cat, maybe I also did

something like this.'

Deer: But black cat isn't taking any responsibility. Black cat again is like, I woke up and there are feathers in my mouth.

Hummingbird: I had the best intention, by the way. But it's a really interesting thing is that the caterpillar's and rabbit's relationship, because I would almost argue not something like friendships can operate this way, **the rabbit almost operates more as a caretaker for the caterpillar than a friend. It's less of an equal sort of relationship and friendship.** It's more like the rabbit is always making the caterpillars food in every single story. It's constantly take care of the caterpillar, and he's just like, 'stay here. Don't die. I'll bring you food, okay,' like, 'Don't fucking go anywhere.' There's a weird power dynamic in the relationship. I would almost argue that they're not friends, not to say that absolve them of the responsibility. It's a very interesting relationship going on.

Deer: I think it doesn't absolve them, it makes him even more guilty, because he knows the limitations of the caterpillar. He knows that the caterpillar maybe doesn't have the mental capacity or physical capacity to anticipate danger...

Turtle: One thing we didn't talk about is the application of the giving Earth roses to rabbit and the

Bee. And what that inspires us for **what happens next.**

Hummingbird: What does it mean to give the seeds of thorny roses to bee and rabbit?

Dog: Should I say what I think? It's about the bee really wants the seeds.

Turtle: So you just gave it?

Goose: it's the evil seeds of the earth.

Penguin: What if the roses from the earth, which got the thorns come to the bee planet and one bee died because of the thorns. Yeah, and other bees will know that immediately? Who will be punished?

Dog: I think that could be an accident? If it's a pure accident, then nobody will be blamed.

Penguin: But who brings this roses to the bee's planet? This bee will be like guilty in that planet. And then every the peaceful the utopia planet will be ruined.

Deer: The bee knows the thorn killed caterpillar, so they chose specifically: I don't care if this is dangerous. I want it.

Hummingbird: Or maybe this is their nature, and they cannot help it.

Goose: if they know the dangerous about the death and maybe they know about caring an the importance of caring.

Penguin: But they share the memory so they doesn't really care about individual staff. So that is like not important at all in that planet. They have the authority to find the roses from the earth.

Turtle: And everyone knows why if they share consciousness then everyone knows that the bee is going to get these seeds and they can essentially giving them permission to plant, by not stopping him.

Dog: do you think it is a good thing or?

Penguin: It's horrible. I don't know. Like there's like no individual freedom on the planet.

Dog: like go back to china?

Penguin: It's not the same, In bee's planet everyone agree, and everyone is supporting the highest will but in China there's like a anger between people but not allowed to say.

Turtle: I feel like giving them the seeds feels out of place. I don't understand how giving the seeds connect to like all the theories that we've come up with.

Dog: Why is it out of place? So do you think it's out

of place because the judge shouldn't give them the seeds? or they should not get the seeds at all? or they shouldn't get seeds from other people but only find seeds by themselves?

Deer: because the judge knows that the seeds that the thorns are dangerous so he's actively choosing to to introduce this danger to a place that doesn't have danger. So it's not like an innocent gift. It's like it's a very loaded it's like giving a country arms you know.

Dog: So this out of place is about the judge.

Deer: The whole thing is about the judge manipulating all of these different people into something that serves the system, the system that he's judging. so it's very easy like it happens people you know America arms, different factions and different places against other places to create loyal for service basically.

Hummingbird: It's basically for oil access.

Deer: oil access, political control, you know, your arm these people and then they killed other people. And then you know, and then you come in.

Dog: That sounds really bad. Do you also think of that?

Turtle: That's one angle. The other thing is that, the rabbit and the bee now believe that the rabbit

is innocent, but they're rewarded the thing that they're trying to get, for proving the innocence is more seeds that could kill more people accidentally and that feels inconsistent. There shouldn't be a reward for proving them innocent, especially not a reward that could kill more people.

Hummingbird: **I think the story should be the rabbit and the bee murder the judge.** And here's the thing. I'm joking, but I'm also not joking.

Deer: Actually, let's break the system, yes to anarchy.

Hummingbird: yes.

Penguin: **Close to our really world, It would be like the system calls people or whatever calls animals to like destroy the roses, all other roses in the universe or a galaxy.** That will be no more things happen like that.

Hummingbird: the sleeping beauty method.

Dog: what is that?

Hummingbird: So there's a story basically, There is a princess in beauty. She gets cursed to like if she pricks her finger on a spinning wheel, she'll get cursed asleep for 100 years. So the king and the queen, they outlaw all the spinning wheels in the kingdom. All of those. Yeah. Obviously, she puts her finger at the end anyways, because

there's a hidden spinning wheel in the capital somewhere. It's wild. I know. Right? Ghostly for 100 years. Some guy comes by kisses or wakes her up whatever.

Dog: why is it close to the real world?

Penguin: **Because I think we are doing that. Like if in China, if there's one COVID in the whole building and like all people get into the hospital.**

Hummingbird: Like I said, I think they should kill the judge. The answer turns out was murder the whole time. Except for not accidental murder. real murder.

Dog: But that also means the rabbit will have no conscience anymore.

Hummingbird: Okay, fine. The audience kills the judge. I think it's a good idea.

Deer: Yeah, because conscience is relative to you and to your own, like, standards and your own.

Dog: So it's not common, you don't share the common conscience with me in the story?

Deer: No, I think you can justify whatever it is that you do in different ways. **There could have been a million other versions of this judge. Like this judge isn't the universal judge.** I think this is what you're trying to maybe do with this judge. I don't

know actually what you're trying to do. But like, I feel that, this is not a universal judge. If this is a specific judge, that's judging according to something specific to a specific set of laws and a specific set of outcomes and a specific set of science.

Hummingbird: How about a democratic judge. One might say a jury instead of a judge.

Dog: That's why I want to have this discussion. **Because I want everyone to be a judge, and to see what they're thinking about.**

Mammoth: Did you imagine or think about when the caterpillar climbing that rose, where caterpillar wanted to go? Is it beautiful? or unly?

Dog: I don't know.

Turtle: Assumption though, that the caterpillar died because it wanted to go and see a rose up close. Like it could have been doing anything. Maybe it had nothing to do with the rose. I don't know.

Penguin: maybe he's just boring. And like, I want to see the rose, and then she's just come.

Deer: maybe he's kinky. Oh, Thrones. Then he dies.

Turtle: Or maybe it was time for him to like build this cocoon. And he was trying to, do anything.

Just because he died with his eyes open like this. And the rose happened to be there doesn't mean it was attracted by rose.

Hummingbird: I mean, I understand that the caterpillar is just a narrative device. But also, what's the caterpillars deal?

Turtle: Like, what's the history of the caterpillar? What does it want?

Penguin: Why doesn't he has mom and dad to take care of him?

Mammoth: That's what I mean. **You can think more about the caterpillar.**

Dog: I don't know anything about caterpillar.

Turtle: Yeah, that would just kind of makes sense. It's not showing a lot of care to this caterpillar. You know what I mean? It's serious. It's like the caterpillar is not even really a character. It's a tool you've kind of made him.

Dog: Should I feel sorry for it?

Turtle: you don't have to. I would.



Reading group 2

14th Jan, 2023

Goldsmiths MFA kitchen

Dog(writer): Do you think Rabbit is guilty?

Unicorn, Anteater: Guilty

Magpie, Beaver, Mouse, Vervet: Not guilty

Dog: Before we start, can I know your favourite animal in the stories?

Magpie: I like the black cat. I like his personality and his story. He seems to love the little bird.

Anteater: It could be the bee because he saved the rabbit. But I think the rabbit is guilty. The bee seems to play a saving role here and he is so witty that he is like the Merchant of Venice. But I also quite like the duck. I feel like I see Hamlet from him. And the rabbit is Macbeth.

Beaver: I like the Prince Duck. I loved his whole story, from what the Prince Duck does all the way through to the two trumped up charges that he

and the rabbit has. Their charges are ridiculous. A lot of things are like that. Including cause and effect, skepticism, black swans, and so on. The text keeps tracing cause and effect, but if you look at it from a skeptical point of view, the cause is not pointing to that effect.

Unicorn: I like the rabbit more because I think the rabbit is a very realistic character. I don't think human nature is necessarily good. Neither completely bright, or completely dark, no one is like that. So I think this character is very vivid, he has both a good side and a dark side.

He would remind me of ordinary people. When they are dealing with something with feelings, they may have both a side that is positive and a side that is negative. I think it's more in line with the psychology of real people, the real nature of human.

Mouse: I don't think I can say I like the caterpillar. **But I think his death was not a bad death at all.** I think he was quite persistent and he was quite brave too. The rabbit was like his leader, introduced him to roses, and then Caterpillar slowly fell in love with rose. I don't think it was the rabbit that made him like it, but caterpillar himself really liked it. He chose to go out and see this rose because he had this urge inside of him. So I think

the caterpillar is responsible for a large part of this consequence, even though the rabbit didn't tell him that the rose had thorns on it. If he really wanted to go and look at it, this is a consequence that he has to bear. Therefore, I don't think the rabbit is guilty. I think the rabbit is still on the good side, which is that he shows the caterpillar more things.

Vervet: I don't like the judge very much, but I thought the character was interesting. Because he is very self-confident. When the rabbit asks him what his crime is, the judge gives a detailed explanation that if we trace the causal chain it's rabbit causing the bad consequences. What he says might not be right, but he believes in himself. **When a person believes in the matter and he has the power, then what he does is right.** Because he is the judge, he does things whatever he wants to do. I think that's an interesting character. And he listens to the bee later and gives them seeds.

Dog: You mentioned that the judge is right in the sense that he believes and has the power. Why would that be right? Let's say if I'm a monarch and I kill my subordinates, would that be right?

Vervet: In the story it is not right in the objective sense. He is right because the power is now in his hands. For example, there is a person who sells

the umbrellas and controls the rain. If you look at the act of selling the umbrella alone: it is raining and it is selling the umbrella, it is also right. But if you know it is raining and he is controlling it, then it's not right.

Beaver: I think right here means reasonably accepted, not morally.

Dog: why do you think the rabbit is not guilty?

Magpie: Like Mouse says, it's the caterpillar's choice and he should have to live with the consequences of his choice. It's not the rabbit told caterpillar to go to the roses or whatever, and he didn't order him to do it and he didn't teach him to do it. So why is the rabbit guilty?

Dog: In the second story, there's a possibility that although the rabbit does not force the caterpillar, rabbit may have controlled caterpillar mentally. It's like gaslighting maybe.

Magpie: But rabbit didn't tell caterpillar to go to rose, he didn't control.

Dog: Maybe rabbit can play some mental tricks to manipulate people? Like the rabbit doesn't tell the caterpillar to go and find it, but he knows that if caterpillar follows some of his hints, then the caterpillar will end up going.

Magpie: But I don't think it's like that. It's the

whole story that makes me think he is not intentional.

Mouse: I don't think that even if a rose had a thorn it would necessarily result in caterpillar's dying 100%. It could be something that looks bad, but actually good or neutral.

Dog: Do you mean that the whole thing is not bad? Even if the caterpillar dies, he dies because he really fell in love with the rose and then he dies, the death is not the only consequence.

Beaver: Objectively speaking, if the rabbit's guilt according to the law is the caterpillar's death, then he is guilty. But whether he is morally wrong, I don't think so. Because it's just an objective event, it's just that this happened in this way and produced this result, and it's hard to say whether it's right or wrong. If the judge thinks he is guilty because the caterpillar died, he is guilty.

Dog: But in your everyday intuition, you feel he is not guilty.

Beaver: Yes, I don't think he is guilty even if he is deliberate. **Because he is not directly manipulating the act, but just leading towards that result.**

Anteater: I think one thing that's not clear is whether the crime under discussion here is a crime in the legal sense or whether one should be

held responsible for the death morally.

Dog: I think if the law is based on the judge in the story, the matter has been made very clear. If the question is whether or not one should be responsible for the death of the caterpillar morally, what do you think?

Anteater: **If I were a rabbit I would feel guilty no matter what and I would feel responsible for it no matter what.** Even if the judge said I wasn't guilty, I would still feel guilty.

I said earlier that suddenly I remembered Lady Macbeth, and then the gaslighting you just talked about. Lady Macbeth doesn't do anything to kill anyone. And Macbeth also has a dream where he meets some witches in the woods who tell him that he will become the king. Then he thinks that these witches foretell his future. It's a bit like the second story where the rabbit dreams that he wants to kill himself and the caterpillar comes to see him and he pulls the caterpillar into the coffin instead. Finally the caterpillar is at peace and the rabbit wakes up thinking that things must be going in the direction of the dream. Although it is Macbeth who has this dream, Lady Macbeth, knowing the dream, personally wants Macbeth to be king. Not to say carefully manipulates, I suppose, she just often advises or gaslights Macbeth

to kill the king. Macbeth himself wants to do the same. When the king and many others around him died, Lady Macbeth herself goes mad first. She keeps feeling that she has blood on her hands and cannot wash it off. Even though she herself does not kill anyone or does anything wrong, but only implies her husband to kill. I remember a scene where she gets up in the middle of the night after she has gone mad and washes her hands, saying that no amount of spices will ever get her hands clean. That's how she ends up dying.

That's why I thought of Lady Macbeth and why I like the bee. I think even if the rabbit is guilty, I wish it does not keep torturing himself.

Mouse: I was actually wondering why the rabbit is so determined to deny its sin. From a spectator's point of view, I think the rabbit innocent, but I think if he sees himself as caterpillar's best friend, it should at least feel guilty in its heart, otherwise I think he is a bad guy. **No one else can say he is guilty, but he has to think he is guilty himself.**

Unicorn: "Caterpillar was my best friend. But I fed up with its softness and fragility. One night, I dreamed I was dead." When I read this paragraph, I thought that the rabbit has a motive to kill because he is described here that he is getting tired of caterpillar's softness and fragility. When I read

this sentence, I thought that the rabbit just started to dislike the caterpillar or hated it so much that he wanted to leave him. Therefore I thought that he had a motive to kill . And then when he dreamt that he was dead, he might have been thinking about these things in his waking life and have had the tendency. That is why he dreamed it.

And after reading this whole paragraph, I felt that maybe from the bottom of his heart the rabbit wanted the caterpillar to die. So I think it was guilty.

Anteater: I feel like when he says he has fed up, it seems like he wants the relationship to end, but he doesn't want to do it directly, so that's why he dreams of his own death first. It doesn't matter if it is his own death or the caterpillar's death. He is going to bring the relationship to end. And it's not a straightforward way of ending the relationship, it's a way of ending the issue with the death of one of the them.

Dog: I feel as if there are now three angles to determine whether the rabbit guilty or not. One is based on the laws or the rules, to see if it is right or wrong; one is based on the motive; another is based on the outcome. For example, if death is considered a worse outcome, Rabbit will be guilty because it's brought about by the rabbit; but if the

caterpillar's love for the rose is seen as part of a whole outcome, then it could be a good outcome.

Dog: It might have something to do with motivation. You mentioned guilt, can psychological feelings be a criterion for judging whether an action is right or wrong?

Mouse: I think it can be analysed from the point of view of having a sense of guilt, or not having a sense of guilt.

Dog: Do you think the rabbit has senses of guilt in this story?

Mouse: I don't think he does.

Dog: Do you all think he doesn't?

Anteater: I think he does.

Magpie: I think he has guilt, but he probably doesn't think of the caterpillar as a very good friend.

Mouse: I think so, definitely not the best friend.

Unicorn: **I think this story reminds me of the Jiang Ge case. It's also this moral guilt, in relation to whether there was actually a crime or not.**

Dog: What is the Jiang Ge case?

Vervet: There were two chinese students studying

in Japan. Jiang Ge was good friend with Liu Xin, and Jiang was killed by Liu's ex-boyfriend. Liu had an fight with her boyfriend when they broke up, then Liu went to Jiang's house to hide. One day the boyfriend appeared at the door, when Jiang talked to Liu's boyfriend outside, Liu locked the door. Her ex-boyfriend lost control of his emotion, and because Liu locked the door and didn't let Jiang Ge in, Jiang Ge was killed by the ex right outside the door.

Anteater: I remember another theory that when Liu Xin stayed at Jiang Ge's house, before Liu Xin went to Jiang Ge's house to hide, Liu Xin already knew that her boyfriend would come over to them and that her boyfriend was violent. One day the two girls were together on the way home. Just when they saw the apartment, her ex-boyfriend appeared. Liu Xin advanced to the door, and Liu said he did not lock the door. But I feel it is highly possible that it was locked. Jiang Ge was killed at the door.

Vervet: Jiang's mother is still appealing.

Unicorn: Yes, her mother has always insisted that Liu Xin is guilty and wants her to be responsible, but Liu herself feels she is not guilty and the court has ruled that she is not guilty. It seems that there is only one compensation was awarded now,

right? And her mother appealed for a long time before she got more than 600,000 yuan in compensation.

Dog: If the rabbit in this story or Liu Xin, if they felt they were guilty, would the condemnation be lighter?

Anteater: I feel that Jiang Ge's mother was angry because when she and Liu Xin's family waited together for news of their children, both of them didn't know whether their children were dead or alive, and when they heard the news that Jiang Ge was dead but Liu Xin was still alive, Liu Xin's family went straight away.

There is also a message Jiang Ge's mother received from Liu Xin's family. Liu Xin's family said it was your family's child who had a short life, not related to me. She might be really angry for this reason.

Mouse: And Liu Xin also sent some malicious blessing SMS or something to Jiang Ge's mother.

Vervet: And provoked her every holiday.

Dog: I would think that the rabbit in this story feels very guilty.

Anteater: What if it wasn't rose? What if it was Arms? Caterpillar falls in love with guns. The gun went off. It seems to change the flavour of the sto-

ry. Rabbit says, I got tired of the relationship and I played with the rifle, but I never told Caterpillar the rifle was going to go off. Because I was the one who loaded it for him every time. The caterpillar fell in love with shooting. One day I went to bed early and didn't load it for him, he went to load it himself and it went off. So he died. Why does it feel so weird?

Mouse: If that's the case, I think rabbits are just pure and simple guilty.

Anteater: I think so. Rose is nicer.

Dog: Actually the story confuses me. The rabbit was confused about the caterpillar's death, and I was confused about the story. The discussion is like a court , where everyone could speak their mind and I am trying to see who has made more sense. But over many discussions, I found that everyone's thoughts make sense. I used to study moral philosophy and philosophers wanted to have a coherent moral theory. However in everyday life everyone's moral outlook seems perfectly adequate to deal with their problems. After a certain amount of reflection, everyone's point of views could be right. So what exactly is moral philosophy for?

Anteater: They can manage guns instead. No need for moral rules.

