

Encounters at the Limit: Literary Representations of Animals and Animality

Doctoral Thesis

by

**Mayank Jha
(2019HSZ0003)**



DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ROPAR

June, 2024

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A Thesis Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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DEDICATED
TO MY
GRANDMOTHER & DR. LOUIS

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Acknowledgment

My path to the completion of this dissertation was weaved in joy and sorrow. Some cannot be thanked in the present but their presence shall remain with me. As the years pass, I know myself better through their words. My first acknowledgment must go to them: my grandmother and Dr. Ansu Louis. I owe my greatest debt of thanks to Dr. Aparna N, who stood by me during trying times. I want to express my gratitude to Dr. Sreekumar Jayadevan, who has always believed in me. I would particularly like to thank my parents, who have continued supporting me when I should have been supporting them. Special thanks to my brother for his faith in me, a faith I can call upon whenever and wherever. For their exceptional generosity with their time, I would like to thank my friends (in no particular order) Kuldip Jadhav, Jaydeep Makwana, Sathiyaseelan Asalan, Deep Raval, Dhairyasheel J, Navneet Mishra, Kusha Singh, Ashish Saxena, Ajay Jangid, Sagar Shayer Yaar, Sharif MPM, Sudesh Kumar, and Aaditya Bhamidipati. For their intellectual and moral support, warmest thanks to Dr. Naveen James, Dr. Swathi Krishna S., and Dr. Adrene Freeda D'Cruz.

Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **Encounters at the Limit: Literary Representations of Animals and Animality**, submitted by **Mayank Jha (2019HSZ0003)** for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Indian Institute of Technology Ropar, is a record of bonafide research work carried out under my guidance and supervision. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the work presented in this thesis is original and has not been submitted, either in part or full, for the award of any other degree, diploma, fellowship, associateship or similar title of any university or institution.

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Lay Summary

We find animals in cities, plains, oceans, jungles, deserts, and mountains. From pole to pole, we are surrounded by animals. They have lived with us and among us for years. Yet we have often considered ourselves separate and superior to this incredible variety of beings subsumed under a common heading. When approaching these beings, we usually think of them as lacking some quintessential human property. The differences, however, between us and them are not of kind but of degree. The distinctions constructed to contrast ourselves from animals cannot be extricated as completely natural or cultural. There lies no one such property that can truly define the human in opposition to the animal. Moreover, when we differentiate or separate ourselves from animals, we do not appreciate the difference and instead erect rankings on the difference or differences to regard them as of lesser importance to us. The estrangements we create from the animals are not limited to them, and the present oppressions within humanity can be traced back to the narrow logic that makes large groups less than human, linking them sometimes directly and at other times obliquely to the animal. In this manner, the distance from so-called human essences enables the exploitation and discrimination of humans and animals. What about animals or animality justifies such practices, systems, and institutions of unjustified and prejudicial treatment? In whose interests does such an understanding of animals and humans continue? The thesis is a practice of finding answers to these complex questions through literary animal representations, which make the familiar unfamiliar and vice-versa. The encounter with the animal in the novels selected for the thesis reminds us that we are not made in isolation but in connection with another. Such encounters, I argue, will show us ethical and better ways of relating to those we deem the Other.

Abstract

The thesis analyses how the concept of anthropocentrism, or human exceptionalism, structured through the exception of a fraction of humanity, permeates and impacts both animal and human lives. Anthropocentrism refers to a set of systems, practices, and institutions that grant a privileged status to only those deemed fully human, resulting in the subjugation of animals and large groups of humanity. In such logic, the animal acts as the constitutive inside and outside of humanity, representing a lack, a negative, an unfulfillable deprivation, an absence. The exclusion and inclusion parameters within humanity are premised upon the animal, evident in discriminatory practices such as that of race, class, and gender in which certain groups become less than human, antihuman, inhuman, beast, wild, or even animal. The question arises, then, as to how, why, and in what ways a wide variety of lifeforms, discovered and undiscovered, preceding and potentially succeeding us, amassed under the common heading of the animal are defined in opposition to the human, in turn justifying the oppressions within humanity. The novels in this study depict animal deaths and lives to articulate a vision from below that challenges anthropocentrism and highlights the interconnected nature of different oppressions and discriminations. In examining the literary representations of animals and animality, the thesis seeks to understand how boundaries between humans and animals are created, the contemporary implications of these boundaries, and the consequences of the dissolution of the boundaries.

Keywords: Anthropocentrism; Animal-Based Protein; Relationality; Materiality; Dualisms, Non-Human Animals

List of Publications from Thesis

Journal

Jha, Mayank, and Ansu Louis. "'All the same under the skin': representations of class and gender in Michel Faber's *Under the Skin*." *Journal of Gender Studies* (2024): 1-19.

Under Review

Research article "Confronting the Human/Animal Dualism: Becoming- Animal in Kurt Vonnegut's *Galapagos*" with *Society and Animals* (Minor Revisions).

Conference presentations

"You Form a Line to Formalize the Former Lies". Philopphantast: A Speculative Fiction and Philosophy Conference. University of Glasgow, United Kingdom. June 5-6 2024.

"Becoming-Animal at the Ends of the World: The Case of Kurt Vonnegut's *Galapagos*". (Un)Common Worlds III Human-Animal Studies Conference. University of Oulu, Finland. October 4-6 2023.

"The Anthropological Machine and its Discontents". Memory, Transgression, and Change: International Interdisciplinary Conference. University of Gdansk, Poland, & University of Gloucestershire, United Kingdom. April 18-19 2023.

Other Publication

Jha, Mayank. "Dancing through patriarchy: garba as a means of resistance in Abhishek Shah's *Hellaro*." *South Asian History and Culture* 13.2 (2022): 215-230.

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1. CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Animals are all around us. They are as much a part of us as we are of them. We can effectively prove that we would not survive without animals, whether due to the interdependency of lifeforms in the functioning of ecosystems or because of the microfauna regulating our bodies. Nevertheless, how we think about animals in contemporary times is rife with paradoxes and contradictions. We classify ourselves as animals, animal-like, or utterly distinct from animals. These contexts mediate the way we perceive them. When we differentiate or separate ourselves from animals, we do not appreciate the difference and instead erect hierarchies around the difference or differences. The creation of difference itself is problematic, for the list comprising animals is endless and cannot represent the diversity of life forms on the planet. The use of the word animal in the singular as opposed to human will be arbitrary since it collapses the entire diversity of life into an opposing difference. The maintaining of difference is premised upon what is “proper to man” which as Derrida observes, “can never be limited to a single trait and it is never closed; structurally speaking it can attract a nonfinite number of other concepts, beginning with the concept of a concept” (*The Animal Therefore* 5). Dualistic reasoning is built upon creating essences that situate the human outside the animal. In this tradition of thinking, the animal becomes defined in an essentially negative way and as lacking human properties. Philosophers have labeled this form of separation as dualistic, based on a binary that distinguishes humans from animals, nature from culture, mind from body, reason from emotion, and so on. Dualism’s characteristic logical structure bases itself on the construction of radically separated and devalued spheres of otherness and negation (Plumwood, *Feminism and Mastery* 41). Dualistic logic is not merely differentiation but the creation

of a subordinated and alienated other from whom any form of dependency is denied. The connection between different forms of oppression of modernity is entrenched in a network of dualisms. While dualistic logic represents the prevailing power relations, its structure closely corresponds to classical propositional logic, which elevates a narrow form of reason at the expense of embodiment and all other spheres related to it. Dualisms form a network and have critical connections with other elements. Some of the key elements in Western dualistic thought are in the form of contrasting pairs: culture/nature; reason/nature; mind/body; human/animal; human/nature; public/private; subject/object; self/other; universal/particular; rationality/animality; production/reproduction (Plumwood, *Feminism and Mastery* 43). This list, which is by no means exhaustive, provides an instructive example of how dualistic logic makes distinctions to deem inferior whatever is linked with nature. Associated with nature, the animal becomes a catch-all concept against which humanity, culture, and all other elements on the other side of the divide are defined.

Human-animal studies, or Anthrozoology, or Animal Studies and its cognate strand Critical Animal Studies, problematize the distinct divisions between humans and animals to examine the cultural implications of maintaining or erasing the division. This interdisciplinary field examines the interactions of humans and animals in social and cultural domains, uncovering our intricate ties to animals. Animal Studies advances the concept of humans as defined only in relation to animals and critique those modes of interactions that emerge from divisive dualisms. Researchers in animal studies situate humans as animals among other animals, and not exclusively in biological terms. The approaches in this field, as Simmons and Armstrong note, represent the breakdown of two powerful hegemonies: “that of the life sciences, which had until recently ruled the animal kingdom as their sole domain, subject only to the laws of positivism; and that of

humanism, which dictated that studies in culture, history, philosophy and society should focus exclusively on the human” (2). While Animal Studies is informed by scientific disciplines such as ethology or zoology, its focus is not necessarily on animals alone but on our interactions with them.

Human-Animal Studies is a relatively new scholarly discipline spanning three decades. It has recently flourished and become an established area of inquiry in different disciplines. The “animal turn,” a phrase denoting the revolutionizing of the human question, along with that of the humanities, sciences, and social studies, began in earnest in the 1970s (DeMello, *Animals and Society* 7; Simmons and Armstrong 2-3). Kalof argues that the expansion and flourishing of the field is closely connected to the worldwide recognition of three facets: “(1) the commodification of animals in a wide variety of human contexts such as the use of animals as food, labor, and the objects of spectacle and science; (2) the degradation of the natural world, a staggering loss of animal habitat, and species extinction, and (3) our increasing need to coexist with other animals in urban, rural, and natural contexts” (1-2). Exploring these facets requires applying theories, data, and concepts from different disciplines, which is why Human-Animal Studies is interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary.

1.1 Methodology and Literary History

It is imperative for animal studies, especially literary animal studies, to have a rigorous methodology that surpasses the extant methodologies of literature. What these methodologies are or look like might appear for scholars trained in the dialectics of identity, or by the notion of what one is by what one is not in clear contradictory terms, to be the most important element in the study of literature. This form of scientific rigor has a history, emanating from the 1830s when the call for positivism replicated on the thinking of August Comte started to dominate the metaphysics of life, wherein the

social sciences and humanities were called upon to follow the scientific logic, methodology, and models rigorously (Moran 10-12). What gets dismissed in this search for rigor in contemporary times is the genuine literary and philosophical question of what methods should do. However, this thesis aims not to abandon methodology, an extreme position similar to the rigor called upon by the confinement of methods, which denies the internal necessity of combinations and their pluralities.

Margo DeMello, in her book *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animals Studies*, published in 2012 and the first in the field, succinctly states, “HAS is also a field of study, like sociology, and a way of seeing. HAS is defined by its subject matter—human-animal relationships and interactions—but also in part by the various ways in which we understand animals themselves. Although HAS is not about understanding animal behavior (although we do, as mentioned, draw on the findings of ethology), we do want to understand animals in the context of human society and culture” (9). It is this vastness of scope that Cary Wolfe in his essay phrased “a daunting interdisciplinarity that is inseparable from its very genesis” while calling for the field to be recognized as any other field (565). Scholars from the field of literature who work in the field of Human-Animal Studies form the branch of Literary Animal Studies, which merges into Animal Studies by recognizing the facts of privileging one term over the other or only depicting a singular perspective, where the term the human in its material and symbolic expressions dominates the animal. A short review of the field would be elaborative in seeking to explain the way literature patterns the field since, in this case, the field is delimiting only to the extent of how might an animal be considered, which enables us to envision and consider both the what and the who. In a more descriptive manner, as various scholars have pointed out, it is *a way of seeing*.

For the literary animal studies scholar Kari Weil, who selects modernist and postmodernist texts from theory (philosophy in her case), literature, and visual art, the question of selection is answered through the illustration of stance. Her stance is to assume a relation among all species while contesting the rigid boundaries between and within species. She writes, “[d]ivided into four parts, the book thus begins by focusing on questions of theory and philosophy (with the aid of literature and visual art), moves to literary readings (read through or against philosophy and theory), and ends with a combination of both” (xix). One can already notice the interdisciplinary nature of her stance, but also a framework based upon questioning rather than answering, or in philosophical terms, upon conceptualizing or creating concepts rather than the usual scientific approach of utilizing/advancing a presupposed concept/method. Similarly, Anat Pick selects visual art (cinema in particular) and works of fiction in her critical account that draws from Simone Weil’s ideas of vulnerability. According to her, vulnerability discourse (discussed later in the thesis) can expand how we see animals to curtail violence. Pick adds that we must review the human-animal distinction and the anxieties, rituals, and contestations that emerge from it to take us beyond ourselves so that we may imagine lives and beings in terms of beauty, existence, and vulnerability. Other works in literary animal studies approach the question of the animal by isolating a few texts from literature to comment upon the larger socio-cultural effects of creating distinctions.

In a markedly intellectual vein, Dominic O’Key, in his *Creaturely Forms in Contemporary Literature*, remarks on the role of literature and the novel form, especially in shaping and sustaining our conceptions of human subjectivity (2). Nevertheless, O’Key’s text recognizes the form of literature in the sense of Giorgio Agamben’s anthropological machine, a machine that produces the recognition of the

human. O'Key, akin to most literary critics in the field, focuses on the subject matter through the creation of a concept he labels "creaturely forms" (5). Creaturely forms are texts that "are newly attentive towards animal life," where attentiveness deriving from the etymology "to *stretch*" denotes a textual stretching- out against narrowly humanist concerns and towards the animal (5). In this sense, O'Key's work strives to chart the creaturely form of life to reveal the liberatory potential for all creatures "colonized, exploited, and dominated across all modernity" (5). O'Key's selection of diverse authors, Mahasweta Devi, J.M. Coetzee, and W.G. Sebald, attests to the difference in methodological approach of Animal Studies. According to him, contemporary is not to be delimited by space or temporality but to a moment that must be recognized or conceived as moment in the first place before its understanding and analysis. In O'Key's words, "To describe a – not the – contemporary means embarking on a process of identifying, clarifying and hence denaturalizing a particular conjuncture that envelops us, structures our experience and creates paths towards specific futures" (8). The contemporary moment requires one to come to terms with the human/animal boundary to scrutinize and change the devastating consequences of capitalism for most life.

What is interesting to note here is the diverse ways of understanding animality these authors endorse and how they conceptualize their theoretical problems. While their positions against anthropocentrism and human-animal distinction hold these viewpoints together, their manner of approaching these questions or their methods deserves mention. In all these cases, we see the deployment of a methodology that entails action, activity, and questioning rather than the mere extrapolation of the already present concepts. A few other textual works further elucidate this difference in thinking. Mario Ortiz Robles' *Literature and Animal Studies* provides a remarkable means of understanding animality through text and its entwined material and symbolic practices.

In doing so, it uses the concept of the “trope” from George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, which are “cognitive referents on the basis of which we make sense of the world, and which, in doing so help us shape it” (19). This concept allows Robles to conceptualize the metaphorical and its relations to our conceptual systems to comment on animal-human entanglements. Although Robles does not trace tropes to the writings of Donna Haraway, her observations on tropes are worth mentioning. “In Greek, *trópos* means a turning; and the verb *trepein* means to swerve, not to get directly somewhere. Words trip us, make us swerve, turn us around; we have no other options. Semiosis is the process of meaning-making in the discipline called semiotics” (Haraway, “Morphing in the Order” 201). There are no direct routes to knowledge and its relationships in any domain, and communicating requires one to swerve. Robles groups animal tropes into literary taxa consisting of equids, canids, songbirds, felids, and vermin, respectively signifying war and labor, carnivory and domestication, harmony in the musical sense, otherness, and abjection. Catherine Parry, the last literary animal studies scholar discussed here (and by no means the last in the field), studies the connection, relations, separations, and conjunctions through the other. Encouraging us to view the animal in a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary context, beyond genre conventions and rigid methods, both Robles and Parry seek to articulate encounters beyond reductions. Parry notes, “Such a full and complex response to fictional animals invites a multidisciplinary approach; human relationships with animals are inflected through political, economic, gendered, legal, social and cultural discourse, and fictional animal representations, because they are conditioned by these multiple concerns, constitute a discursive nexus” (5). The four key objectives she focuses on (reduction, distinction, evolution, and entanglement) are inspired by Derrida’s post-structuralist philosophies of *limitrophe* and *folded frontier* (Derrida, *The Animal Therefore* 30, 47). These concepts enable Parry to

ask important ethical and ecological questions pertaining to all life. This thesis utilizes Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's complex concept of becoming (becoming-animal) and what Donna Haraway deems as figures of indeterminacy, such as the cyborg, companion species, and nature-culture.

Deleuze and Guattari created the concept of becoming, along with its interrelated concepts such as assemblage, body-without organs (BwO), schizoanalysis, plane of immanence/consistency, machinic, and affect (which is synonymous with becoming). Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari believed that concept creation and philosophy are inextricable, wherein a new concept will allow a new way of thinking, bringing about a new way of living. Deleuze and Guattari write, "in philosophy, concepts are only created as a function of problems which are thought to be badly understood or badly posed" (*What is Philosophy* 16).

The concept of entanglement, as understood generally in humanities and social sciences, is a good starting point for badly understood problems. In these fields, the concept is used in two ways: to justify situations without beginning without end, without causation, without internal consistency, or, in other words, the inability to conceive or clarify because the thing is endlessly complicated. The other manner in which entanglement is used in these field is to shroud oneself in complexity for the want of not being seen as a presenter of overly simplified views (Buchanan, "Must we eat fish" 84). Entanglement, in this sense, becomes a shortcut in these fields and emerges from an impoverished understanding. It circumvents the dependencies that arise in any arrangements, as well as the internal logic and investments dictating the stability of these arrangements. Entanglements must be viewed as the first stage of complexity, not as an ending but as a starting point and as the formulation of a concept for resolving an indeterminacy. What appear as separate determinate systems existing independently are

rather elements of a complex and singular system (Buchanan, “Must we eat fish” 84).

Put otherwise, “in the case of two physical quantities described by non-commuting operators, the knowledge of one precludes the knowledge of the other” (Einstein, Podolsky, & Rosen 777).

With the concept of entanglement in mind, one can understand how Deleuze and Guattari posit the clarification of becoming:

A becoming is not a correspondence between relations. But neither is it a resemblance, an imitation, or, at the limit, an identification. . . For if becoming animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating an animal, it is clear that the human being does not “really” become an animal any more than the animal “really” becomes something else. Becoming produces nothing other than itself. We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are. What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 238-239).

The concept of becoming-animal shifts the logic of transcendence, or the logic of (identity) Being or beings, to the logic of becomings (immanence, difference, and proliferation). Becoming-animal is therefore a challenge to notions of pre-given purposes, goals, or norms. It does not involve the human substituting the animal, or vice-versa, but entering a common zone between the two. This entry allows one to conceive of each other in novel ways enabling a new form of living. Since the terms (human/animal and other such dualistic pairs discussed later) are often reified and premised upon identity in the contemporary moment, these terms have been reduced to the transcendence of exchange-value and capital. However, becomings are always beyond mere exchange, and becoming-animal similarly involves not reductive approaches of cause and effect, or of one and the other. It involves the surplus value of desire that cannot be limited monetarily even if it appears so (See Buchanan, *Assemblage Theory* 60-62). For Deleuze, one must conceive life not in fixed and

imposed terms but in the flow of things or becomings that convenience the being. Beings/beings do not create movements; they hinder them, and becomings are the processes through which a movement happens.

The human/animal entanglement requires the resolution of an indeterminacy that threatens to extinguish innumerable lives. Additionally, it requires not relativism or positivism but a rethinking of the human in its present relations. It is here that the thoughts of Haraway, and Deleuze and Guattari intersect, where both, through transversal (or hybrid) descriptions of philosophical, literary, material, and scientific entities, call upon a new people to come who do not diminish our power to act but increase it. The project of all knowledge echoing Haraway is to contest those dominating positions that are inscribed as “self-identical, unmarked, disembodied, unmediated, transcendent, born again” (“Situated Knowledges” 193)¹. Instead of contemplating the world in terms of mastery and possession which have had largely negative consequences, one must conceive it in terms of becomings, and becoming-animal in this particular case, encourages us to see us as expressing affects while being affected in various ways (Beaulieu 78). It is a question of asking what affects or becomings or intensities we share with animals, and there are few places richer than literature for such an enquiry.

¹ The animal in literature is neither a code of information that DNA reveals, nor a mere amalgam of human metaphors. Rather, an animal exceeds both these ways of seeing, and appears as what Haraway terms the “coding trickster” or “coyote” from the American Indian accounts. This witty agent or wily figure pushes us to strike up “non-innocent conversations” and obliges us to give “heterogenous accounts of the world” without mastery but with fidelity, while knowing that we might be “hoodwinked” (“Situated Knowledges” 199).

Donna Haraway, Deleuze and Guattari's concepts are both anti-anthropocentric and inter-relational, facilitating the blurring of two seemingly determinate systems conceived in terms of being and not being. By situating the origin of terms in the concept of difference rather than identity or becoming rather than being, the thinkers discussed in the thesis define power not just in terms of capture or power over bodies but also in a positive light as enhancing the modes of perception and relations with others.

The narratives chosen for the thesis follow three interrelated lines, broadly classified under anthropocentrism and narrowly under slaughter, domestication, and proliferation. Each asks specific questions on edibility, inedibility, and the underlying patterns (symbolic, cultural, social) that cannot be dissociated from these material practices. In all cases, the animal acts as the limiting term benefitting only few at the expense of many. Those who are closer to the animal, as the thesis explicates, are often on the negative side dualistic pairs, which enables an association with difference rather than stable hegemonic identities, and the inhabiting of common zones between what is inhuman, animal, and the human.

Narrative of slaughter in literature are few and far between, especially those that create a diverse storyline not mediated by the consumption aspect alone. Novels that step beyond the realms of exchange, where not just animals but humans are involved in the process. Ruth Ozeki's novel (*My Year of Meats*) is an excellent example of such exchange since it is minoritarian in the Deleuzian sense, implying that it is not a work to be ascertained by space but by its modes of formation and its opposition to those terms that are privileged and deemed original (See Colebrook, *Deleuze* 104-106). Questions of race, gender, meat, and animals who are turned to meat intertwine in this narrative of slaughter.

Similarly, Michel Faber's *Under the Skin*, written after research on animal farming is animated by questions of not just who or what is meat but of those people who are isolated from society as a result of their seemingly inhuman nature maintained through their distance from properly human identity. Initiations of domination and competition pattern modern capitalist societies in acts of production and metaproduction. As humans become meat and aliens become humans in the novel, this strange inversion creates displacements where those involved in physical labor are rendered inhuman and closer to animality, with the least value of exchange. The exchange takes place symbolically and materially while having severe repercussions for most lives, as the chapter discusses. The ideals of being a man and being a woman interact with the idea of animality in the Western context to show us how a range of affects consolidate a power over the other by inhibiting other affects to emerge. What is pathological, what is exemplary, and what is animalistic are traced in the reading of the novel on the basis of who is expendable and exchangeable in a hierarchical order composed of ideals, identities, and beings. Such a tracing also reveals the lines of flight, or the awareness of the stultifying deprivations that are created.

The question of edibility is often viewed in opposition to inedibility in the classical sense. However, certain circumstances can change the way one perceives the deaths of animals. Two examples from Indian literature inform the thesis here and are selected here to present a different view from the West. Western forms of animal rearing and exploitation have become integrated into Indian livestock-oilseed-grain production. Scholars have labeled India as one of the foremost centers of meatification. The thesis inquires about the range of ways we can imagine animals from objects, products, meat, luxury, symbols, metaphors, pets, and fellow creatures. Concepts of relatedness and affective proximity inform the analysis to demonstrate the sorts of alliances that take

place when witnessing the death and life of a particular animal. Further, the thesis scrutinizes how we might place ourselves beyond the context of consumption and exchange.

While the two chapters are organized around ‘real’ animals which are extensive to the human, or residing outside the properly human, the third chapter studies the radical destabilization of being that happens when the animal become inseparable from the human. The human in Kurt Vonnegut’s *Galápagos*, no longer conceived in fixed or immobile terms or more as a cyborg figuration or a form of becoming, displaces those ontologies of evolution where it is deemed progressive, linear, and goal-oriented. Scholars have criticized Vonnegut for showing a misanthropic view of humankind, where humans devolves into marine mammals with small brains. However, *Galápagos*, I argue is not a narrative of devolution because it plays with the idea of punctuated evolution (in a truncated understanding: rapid evolution of particular species due to geographic isolation). In doing so, it plays with the idea of the individual as a pre-formed unit replicating and reproducing other pre-formed units. Instead, the questions are about what individuation or affects create an individual and then proceed to allow evolution. Beings do not pre-exist their relatings, or in other words, there lies nothing behind difference. How might one act with the knowledge that the animal is the beginning and the end of man is traced. In such a case, what is human cannot be envisioned in terms of being, which is the illusion of a few moments in time and space that ordain a self-enclosed and bounded entity disentangled from the rest. Rather, the human is conceived in the process of becoming, or cyborg figurations, entities connecting and relating to other entities (both material and immaterial) to function differently and in opposition to privileged perspectives of mind over body, human over non-human, and similar dualisms. The novel enables a way of seeing that does not

indulge in pre-existing or original or presupposed frameworks such as nature/culture, human/inhuman, and animal/human.

History of Animal Studies

We can trace the emergence of Animal Studies to animal rights and animal justice movements, which sprang alongside civil rights and feminist movements. The studies in this field are intertwined with animal justice and consider not just the question of the animal but also the material practices in which animals are embedded. The rise of Animal Studies is often correlated with the publication of two influential works on animal ethics and rights, Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* (originally published in 1975) and Tom Regan's *The Case for Animal Rights* (originally published in 1983). Singer's work places Jeremy Bentham's powerfully evocative comments on animals at the forefront: "The question is not, can they reason? Nor, can they talk? But, can they suffer? Why should the law refuse its protection to any sensitive being?" Singer argues that all animals are sentient creatures with similar pain capacities as humans. The utilitarian theory that he advances in his work depends upon the principle of equal consideration, which means that if our actions cause an animal pain, then the benefits of that particular action must immensely outweigh the pain the animal suffers. Regan's text continues animal liberation and animal protection discourses but differs in its approach by emphasizing the moral status of animals instead of maximized interests or utilitarianism. Regan argues for the rights of animals and argues that animals have interests that should not be subject to productivity or utility. Regan states that animals are "subjects of life" and "have beliefs and desires; perception, memory, and a sense of the future, including their own future; an emotional life together with feelings of pleasure and pain; preference- and welfare-interests; the ability to initiate action in pursuit of their desires and goals; a psychological identity over time" (243). Although

Singer and Regan's works have been influential in animal advocacy and rights movements, especially in the context of animal slaughter in factory farms, scholars have noted that their approach has considerable drawbacks. Aaltola and Hadley argue that most philosophical research in animal ethics, including the works of Regan and Singer, are cases of moral extensionism and are not genuinely innovative (2). They define moral extensionism as “the extension of existing moral and political theory across the species barrier to non-human animals” (2). The research in these fields simply extend established theoretical premises to include animals. The objections and problems raised against these theories are ignored or dismissed by merely extending their conceptual apparatus to include non-human animals. Further, the criteria for evaluating the moral theories, argue Aatola and Hadley, are uncertain and do not make clear, for instance, what suffering is, the role of intuitions in moral theory, capacities needed for moral status, or the metaphysics of intrinsic value (3). Another issue with equality discourses is the logic of sameness, which suppresses the myriad differences of lifeforms. This logic is based upon foregrounding rights, attributes, qualities, or ethics already present in humans that must be extended to animals. These traits are presumed to be quintessentially human and do not destabilize the human as the logos for basing all arguments. Maneesha Deckha succinctly observes, “arguments about why animals matter typically measure animals against human metrics of ethical worth such as whether or not they possess a sufficient capacity to reason, suffer, emote, use language, make tools, or exhibit some other trait presumed to define what it means to be human” (“Vulnerability Equality” 49). In response, Deckha advances “vulnerability discourse,” which does not rely on equality but on the dependence engendered through embodiment as a consequence of sharing common conditions. This discourse avoids the drawbacks of the sameness logic and enables the recognition of differences. In other words, this

approach allows us to not only escape the entrapments of an anthropocentric orientation but also to engage in the dimensions of human interaction with various life forms.

The perceived similarities and differences from animals manifest in our interactions with them. The study of these interactions, as Garry Marvin and Susan McHugh observe, is animated by relations of whys, hows, and whats: “why animals are represented and configured in different ways in human cultures and societies around the world; how they are imagined, experienced, and given significance; what these relationships might signify about being human; and what about these relationships might be improved for the sake of the individuals as well as the communities concerned” (202). The thesis incorporates these questions to advance forms of thinking that are not premised on the search for markers of human exceptionalism determined through the creation of sharply demarcated spheres of otherness. Put simply, this project aims to highlight alternative ways of knowing and relating to animals that are not based upon dualisms but rather on our embeddedness in ecosystems and on the vulnerabilities, potentialities, and exchanges resulting from our shared conditions on the planet. Before proceeding to outline the focuses of the three chapters presented here, it would be worth turning our attention to anthropocentrism, a concept that underpins the search for uniquely human properties.

1.2 Anthropocentrism

Anthropocentrism refers to a set of institutions, systems, and practices that establish and reproduce the existence and interests of a fraction of humanity who are deemed to be fully human (Calarco, *Beyond*). In anthropocentric logic, what is proper to man rarely encompasses the species and generally denotes a group of privileged individuals who can attain and reproduce properties considered typically human. The properties that the privileged group deems quintessentially human are dynamic, changing over time and

context. However, Derrida points out that these properties are defined against animality and animals (Derrida, *The Animal Therefore*). Through these properties or essences, certain groups of humans characterize themselves as superior or unique at the expense of all others who are said to be distant from these properties.

Val Plumwood, in her book *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*, argues that anthropocentrism is built on the foundation of dualism constructed on the logic of One and the Other, where One acts as the logos defining all aspects of the Other. She postulates the following central structural features of anthropocentrism (radical exclusion, homogenization, incorporation, instrumentalism, and denial) (*Environmental Culture* 106-110), which have been modified here to feature animals:

Radical Exclusion

In anthropocentric logic, humans are treated as radically separate from animals, who are marked as the inferior other. Any continuity with animals is denied to emphasize attributes seemingly absent or lacking in animals. The animal becomes a generalizable category that represents a devalued other lacking agency and qualities that humans possess. Moreover, anthropocentric logic is not dictated by species barriers attributing negative value to those who are not truly human. Animality is linked to systems of difference (class, caste, gender, race) to place humans and animals in a hierarchy.

Homogenization/Stereotyping

This aspect closely corresponds to Derrida's observations regarding the collapse of all diversity of lifeforms into the common term "animal." The entire complexity of lifeforms is reduced in terms of absent arbitrary qualities, leading to the conception of animals as interchangeable and replaceable units, rather than as infinitely diverse and beyond totalizing systems of human thought. The singularity and heteronomy of life are denied to classify animals as an economic resource.

Backgrounding/Denial

Anthropocentric culture denies dependency on the Other, or in this case, on animals. Whatever harms that are incurred to humans as a result of this consideration becomes a technological problem requiring rectification. The animal and those associated with animality are represented as an inessential background to a technological society. The human, in this premise, is rendered an independent and autonomous self. Wherever there is a dependency on nature and animals in this context, it is treated as a technological problem to be overcome.

Incorporation

Animals become defined only in relation or opposition to humans. The primary term or the One in all these instances is the human, and the derivative or the Other is always the animal. The differences between the two become grounds for claiming superiority, mastery, and control.

Instrumentalism

Animals under anthropocentric logic are viewed as passive objects without agency and purpose except when serving human means and ends. For this reason, we see the extraordinary ambivalence in the ethical considerations of non-human animals. Human categories shape the manner in which animals are viewed, treated, and used. Animals can be livestock, pets, pests, experiments, wild, or feral, depending on what means they serve in the human world. In instrumental outlooks, the agency and subjectivity of animals are denied to reduce them as properties and commodities for human purposes.

As these structural features reveal, human uniqueness is established through claiming anthropological differences and by positing an ontological distinction from which the human in its unique form emerges. Often, these distinctions revolve around the axis of language, reason, and mind. The other side of the divide are adjudged to

possess these capacities partially or not at all. What differentiates anthropocentric logic from speciesism is that speciesism discriminates through belonging to a species. Anthropocentrism disregards such belonging, producing differences that are internal as well as external to the human order. Anthropocentrism as a concept can account not only for the subjugated status of animals but also for the marginalized status of humans. Systems of othering are intertwined, and one form of prejudice often interweaves into another. The logic dictating such flows is anthropocentric, and this logic, as Calarco argues, grants “full standing and privilege only to certain groups of human beings while excluding large swaths of humanity and the vast majority of animals and more-than-human others from consideration” (*Beyond* 19). Further, anthropocentrism as a concept can also reveal how power and control are unevenly distributed among humans as well as animals. This implies that animals can also be privileged over humans depending on the context, and it is not mandatory that animals will always be inferior to humans in all circumstances.

What follows here, then, are three chapters that explore the operations of anthropocentric logic in select literary texts. In the first, we analyze how the concept of human exceptionalism structured through the exception of a few humans permeates not just animal lives but also discriminatory practices of racism, sexism, and classism. The chapter highlights how the extrication of one form of discrimination from the other leads to the false conclusion that the logic of different discriminations is disconnected. The chapter demonstrates the interconnected nature of different oppressions and how inclusion and exclusion parameters depend on who is classified as fully and properly human. The domain of practices such as meat eating and animal farming in these novels provide the set of focal materials for exploring the systems of power that subordinate animals and marginalize humans. The second chapter continues the focus on material

practices of meat eating and animal agriculture, shifting the location of these practices to India. Slaughter enables us to explore questions of hierarchy and identity, while consumption of a particular slaughtered animal allows us to study the symbolism of meat. Who becomes meat, who eats it, is meat eating natural and justified, and is being human dependent on animal deaths are some questions the chapter seeks to answer through the recourse of literary texts selected for this purpose. Concepts of relatedness and witnessing inform the analysis here to delineate the strategies of resistance that emerge in contesting anthropocentric logic. The third chapter shifts its focus from material practices to the very construction of boundaries that permit instrumental uses and abuses of large swaths of humans and animals. Utilizing philosophical premises of hybridity and indeterminacy, the chapter explores how the chosen novel destabilizes hierarchical binaries to give way to a transformed humanity that embraces the otherness within to find harmony with nature and its lifeforms. When conceived as an assemblage of organic and inorganic forces, the human can resist the dominant view of the human being as disembodied and autonomous.

1.3 Overview of Chapters

The examination of anthropocentric logic begins with Ruth Ozeki's novel *My Year of Meats*. Ozeki's debut novel is a popular text in Animal Studies due to its depiction of animals as meats. The questions it raises on meat production have been especially pertinent in the discussions surrounding this novel. This is because the novel collapses, as Sze has noted, the boundaries between natural, synthetic, and technological while implicating the hybrid that is born with pollution and toxicity. DES (Diethylstilbestrol), a man-made estrogen known for its carcinogenic capacities, is at the novel's forefront and acts as a literal and symbolic metaphor for the transformations it engenders in the bodies of animals who are injected this hormone and in the bodies of humans who

consume the injected animals. Critics have analyzed the novel as an explication of the relations of contamination in our worlds (Fish; Johnston; Harrison; Lee). Ecofeminist perspectives dominate the articles written on the novel when describing the nature of pollution, with women's bodies and reproduction being associated with institutional violence that also denigrates nature (Wallis; Xu; Fish). Fish and Harrison use narrative theory to examine the environmental justice concerns raised to change public perceptions. They suggest that the novel's narrative creates political affect by interposing sentimentality with scientific data. Several scholars have critiqued the novel for its representation of the U.S. as the model of race and gender equality. Cheng, for instance, argues that the novel paints a picture of celebratory multiculturalism, portraying the U.S. as a liberal and progressive nation where diversity collapses into what is normative. Critical commentaries highlight that the novel presents an image of an inclusive multicultural nation obscuring the tensions inherent in the flattening of differences (Yeon Kim). Moreover, America in the novel is resituated through these inclusions as the progressive nation of the world and a model for feminist liberatory politics. However, the liberation is attached to the ideology of domesticity, the normative institutions of marriage and family, and to corporate capitalism.²

Scholars have also highlighted the connections between animal bodies and women's bodies, along the lines of Carol J. Adams' influential treatise on meats. In *Sexual Politics of Meat*, Adams postulates the concept of an absent referent. She states that there are three ways in which animals can become absent referents: literally, definitionally, and metaphorically. In the first case, butchering and slaughtering of

² For a different approach to the question and significance of difference, see Black, where she describes a particular form of transnational perception or cosmofeminism as she calls it, based on cosmopolitanism.

animals makes them actually absent from the world. Renaming the butchered parts makes the animals disappear and reappear as fragmented flesh labeled as pork, steak, chops, and so on. The real animal is transformed into meat, denying the animals their presence, individuality, and subjectivity. The absent referent reveals only dead animals. Animals become an absent referent by becoming “metaphors for describing people’s experiences” (Adams 20). The absent referent as metaphor refers to something else that has occupied a place in the imaginative frame. Xu utilizes the last component of Adams’ absent referent to comment on the conflation of meat with women. Echoing Adams, Xu argues that sexual violence and meat eating intertwine in the depiction of meats and women in the text. The eroticization of meat and women in the text reveals the intersection of the absent referent through metaphors. Xu observes that the violence is reproductive, embodied through women and meat (73). Meat as a metaphor, explains Chiu, serves multiple functions: “a metaphor for womanhood, the locus of anticapitalist politics, an object through which the violence of capital upon the body is played out, and a subject of public health and environmental concern” (192). Laura Anh Williams’ study of the novel extends Adams’ concept of the functioning of slaughterhouses through ignorance and invisibility. Williams’ study is based upon “animal bodies and its representational and biopolitical renderings of raced and gendered bodies” (248). Williams is the first article to highlight the intricate animal studies angle immanent in the novel. She details the processes of distance and ignorance operative in consumption practices and how these consumption practices reflect the connections with other oppressions evident in the gastronomic and sexualized consumption of the women in the novel. Nevertheless, Williams’ article suffers from the correlation of two axis: dehumanization and objectification. Haslam and Loughnan define dehumanization as “perceiving a person or a group as lacking humanness” (401). Even the reversal of the

concept in the form animalization does not enable any positive value attributions. Animal metaphors, as Haslam and his colleagues demonstrated experimentally, typically signify disgust or degradation (405). While dehumanization or animalization can be used to analyze or examine the value attributed beyond species lines and within, it does not disrupt the hierarchies structuring anthropocentric logic. The critiques that demonstrate how the metaphors of meat reflect other oppressive practices do not call into question the primary structure of discrimination. As Adams has astutely observed, the absent referent is hegemonic and conceals the “originating oppression of animals that establishes the potency of the metaphor of butchering” (23). The absent referent is kept in place by both men and women who indulge in meat eating by creating a moral, ethical, and physical distance from animals to misrecognize their involvement in the structure of oppressions.

The absent referent stems from the notion that the thing which is objectified is the primary referent through which the metaphors operate, which in this case are animals. However, this is not to foreground or background one social justice movement over the other. Instead, it calls for a “multi-optic vision”, a “way of seeing that takes disparate justice claims seriously without privileging any one presumptively” (Kim 19). The focus shifts from analyzing oppressions in a dyad, inviting us to critique the multidimensionality of power that weaves different oppressions together. Multi-optic vision encourages “a reorientation toward an ethics of mutual-avowal, or open and active acknowledgment of connection with other struggles” (Kim 20). With multiple intersecting hierarchies in mind, Claire Jean Kim critiques Plumwood’s concept of “interlocking” dualisms (17). She suggests we conceptualize in terms of taxonomies instead of dualisms. The complex hierarchical ordering, argues Kim, should not be conceived as interlocking but as synergistic to replace the metaphor of dualisms with

that of energy. This approach is similar in many ways to the concept of anthropocentrism outlined above. Both approaches advance an understanding of oppressions as interconnected, with one oppression intersecting with another in dynamic ways. New ways of imagining ourselves in relation to others will emerge from this thinking by acknowledging the logic inherent in one form of oppression with another. Plumwood's argument is not altogether different from Kim's concept or the concept of anthropocentrism. Plumwood writes:

In practice these dualisms form a web or network. One passes easily over into the other, linked to it by well-travelled pathways of conventional or philosophical assumption. The concepts of humanity, rationality and masculinity form strongly linked and contiguous parts of this web, a set of closely related concepts which provide for each other models of appropriate relations to their respective dualised contrasts of nature, the physical or material, and the feminine. These concepts and identities are linked by the shared logical structure of dualism inherited from the exclusions of the master identity, as well as by a number of other features (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 45-46).

The notion of a network or web represents the very multidimensionality of power that Kim wishes to highlight. As I shall elaborate later in the thesis, a web is a complex structure akin to Deleuze's rhizome or Haraway's cyborg. While the orb web of some spiders is characterized by radial and circular designs, the cobwebs of other spiders are chaotic. The webs of a caterpillar are indeterminate, with beginnings and endings impossible to decode.

The chapter demonstrates how neoliberal and anthropocentric logic maintains oppressions external to humanity and internal to it. When animals become reduced to production relations, the chapter argues that building upon those relations to examine oppressions does not deconstruct the logic of the One and the Other structuring such relations. Moreover, whichever community or group gets linked to a certain kind of

meat also dictates how they are perceived. Examining these relations requires us to retread those historical, social, and political processes that enable some practices to emerge as definitive.

The chapter then proceeds to analyze Michel Faber's novel *Under the Skin* through the concept of anthropocentrism. As elaborated earlier, anthropocentric logic allows only a few to qualify as properly human, resulting in the marginalization of most life. Faber's novel is often read as a discourse that challenges the treatment animals receive at the hands of humans. It does this through a linguistic inversion where humans are substituted as animals to be slaughtered at the hands of aliens who consider themselves humans. However, the animals or humans that are slaughtered belong to the margins, which means the slaughter is not indiscriminate. It is this discrimination based on class and gender that the chapter highlights to demonstrate power's multidimensionality. Within the human order, those assumed to be at the opposing end of dualisms are often associated with animality and attributes connected with the body. Their distance from rationality, mind, and reason is emphasized to enable their domination and instrumental use. In this case, the men whom the female protagonist picks up are from the margins, enabling their easy associations with whatever is deemed less than human or less than the human standard. The men fail to achieve the normative norms of manhood, not only through their relations to gendered forms of discrimination but also through the intersection of gender with class. I argue that the representation of men in the novel replicates that of working-class men in the British context. The chapter draws on R.W. Connell's concept of marginalized masculinities to explore how the lives of men become inferior not just in terms of their bodies but also by failing to align with the hegemonic norms of manhood, such as staying employed, married, and being a provider for the family. We can see the multidimensionality of power through this

novel, as it differentiates both aliens and humans based on class and gender. By doing so, it inadvertently places working-class men in a hierarchy where working-class aliens are lower than middle- and upper-class aliens and are similar to working-class men who are said to lack similar attributes: brain, reasoning, rationality, and so on. The linguistic inversion that classifies humans as food animals further links the lack back to animals, thus reflecting the intricacies of all oppressions and how they are strengthened through their links to each other.

Further, the chapter argues how the representations of working-class women are reproduced in the characterization of the female protagonist. The issue with representations of the working class, as Beverley Skeggs' work has detailed, has historically "enabled them to be fixed, categorized, classified, pathologized, projected onto and used as boundary markers" (*Class, Self, Culture* 181). She further elaborates on how the representations of the working class operate across different symbolic systems, whether academic, popular, institutional, or political. This class, argues Skeggs, is recognized, "but not in the terms of liberal individualism; rather they are mis-recognized as a symptom of an anxiety without humanity - mis-recognized in order to be denied recognition" (*Class, Self, Culture* 181). Mis-recognition involves the ascription and essentialization of attributes and characteristics to this class to impose fixity on the people of this class while simultaneously allowing certain values to be mobile. Mobility depends upon the marketing and commodification of values, and those in power decide these values. We can see here how anthropocentrism disguised as neoliberal logic creates a separation within humanity itself to delimit who is fully human.

The crux of the next chapter is the need to recognize the different values that exist outside of the hegemonic symbolic systems while problematizing attachments to

the normative reasonings generated in the dominant symbolic orders. However, this does not entail bypassing questions on intersections of one form of domination from another. The chapter concentrates on two novels set in India to explore the diverse representations and associations of value to the practice of animal agriculture, meat consumption, and to the animals themselves embedded in these practices. As most animal studies scholarship on meat has detailed, consuming any animal-sourced protein in contemporary times is a statement of power over the animals (Fiddes; Fudge, “Why Easy”; *Animal*). The subjugation and control of animals facilitate the consumption of animal-sourced foods and proteins. As Melanie Joy has observed, these practices depend on a mythology that establishes meat consumption in the West as normal, natural, and necessary (96). Piazza et al. have extended Joy’s critique by adding the element of niceness to these three justifications. They contend that consumers of meat often appeal to the taste and texture of meat, claiming that it is more fulfilling, satisfying, and enjoyable than vegetarian or vegan foods. The element of niceness associates pleasure with meat to rationalize its consumption.

While in the West, meat is often regarded as the main component of everyday meals, the same cannot be said for the Indian subcontinent. In other words, tastes vary and change, and taste itself is a cultural and learned response. However, we are seeing drastic changes in developing countries such as India, where meat production and consumption have risen to the extent that scholars have labeled these countries “centres of meatification” (Jakobsen and Hansen, “Geographies of Meatification” 2-3). India’s increasing integration into the industrial grain-oilseed-livestock complex has made it a leading meat producer in the world. Tony Weis, who provided the concept of the grain-oilseed-livestock complex, explains it as “the dominant system of agriculture across the temperate world, and is spreading to significant parts of the tropics. Its landscapes can

be likened to islands of concentrated livestock within seas of grain and oilseed monocultures, with soaring populations of a few livestock species reared in high densities, disarticulated from the surrounding fields” (Weis 8). The rise of meat consumption in the developing world is in accordance with uneven capitalist expansion, which privileges profit and productivity, overriding animal welfare, sustainability, and ecological balance. This intersection of the cultural, the indigenous, and the transnational emerges in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s novel *The Revenge of the Non-Vegetarian*.

As Fiddes has pointed out, meat is symbolic, representing something beyond its apparent identities (41). This aligns with Adams’ concept of the absent referent, where meat takes on metaphorical connotations that differ from its original signification. The question thus becomes of how value is attached, exchanged, and reproduced through meats in specific contexts and how these values are given positive or negative attributions. To tackle the complexity of the question, the chapter incorporates perspectives from science and anthropology that have detailed the omnivorous heritage of humankind. While tastes, distinctions, and food pathways are social and cultural, they are not independent of biology. The question, therefore, is not whether vegetarianism, veganism, or meat-eating is natural but how certain practices, customs, and traditions become hegemonic in the anthropocentric sense. Considering these factors, the chapter addresses questions the novel raises, such as: What does eating well signify? Why is there a desire for meat? What is the symbolic nature of meat in India? How can we imagine our relations with animals in contemporary times, and what aspects of these relations need to improve and change?

Further, research has shown that categorizing animals as food diminishes our moral concern toward them and reduces their perceived capacity to suffer (Bratanova et

al.). Can animals embedded in agriculture be viewed other than as commodities, objects, or foods? This is the chapter's concern as it traces answers via the selected novels. Industrialized slaughter makes the animals, as well as the people working in the slaughterhouses, invisible. In industrialized slaughter or factory farming, power operates through mechanisms of distance and concealment, hiding the killing, the killers, and the killed. As a counter to these mechanisms of power, Timothy Pachirat advances a "politics of sight" defined as "organized, concerted attempts to make visible what is hidden and to breach, literally or figuratively, zones of confinement in order to bring about social and political transformation" (15). The chapter elaborates on two aspects of slaughter and killing: how zones of confinement are spatial and symbolic for most humans and animals and how a politics of sight requires inhabiting a zone of indeterminacy where the attributes, characteristics, properties, essences that seemingly separate the human from the animal collapse to outline our shared conditions and vulnerabilities with all life. These aspects lead us to the concept of "witnessing," which does not limit us to the concept of meat, forcing us to reconsider ethical and moral evaluations in the face of animal death. Witnessing, as Dave has conceptualized it, is a "radical interpenetration of life and death: to exercise a disciplined presence to violence that opens up a death that then compels a new kind of responsible life in a previously unimaginable skin" (442). The bounded self, as separate from animals, is blown apart when witnessing the death of an animal that cannot flee from its fate. The control and domination of any being, especially those enmeshed in agriculture, is destabilized through this act, as the previously bounded self recollects its affective proximity to the other through pain, suffering, and death. Witnessing deaths causes us to rethink our obligations and responsibilities since what the animal suffers can be related to and perceived by the human, deconstructing the one from the other. Animal death, as the

chapter explores, becomes a phenomenon of bordering, connecting the human and the animal in ways that make dualistic identities unfeasible.

The second chapter subsequently utilizes Perumal Murugan's novel *Poonachi or The Story of a Goat* to explore how human lives are not just marked by deaths but also by animal lives. The novel advances creative means of imagining our relations with animals, not necessarily as a collective opposed to humanity, but as individual subjective beings with their own agencies and interests. The chapter continues to investigate the various ways we can relate to animals despite our irreducible differences throughout the novel. In this context, the chapter employs Radhika Govindrajan's concept of relatedness, which seeks to analyze "not only to how interspecies connection can take different forms depending on the kind of nonhuman animal that is engaged but also to how understandings and experiences of what it means to live a life in relation to another shift across different kinds of humans depending on their caste, class, and gender, among other things" (30). The reading of the novel provides an example of how one can experience interspecies relationships that collapse the affective distance between humans and animals to place the latter beyond profit and production. As several scholars have previously pointed out, relatedness depends on acknowledging that the connection between beings is always partial, which means all totalizing views are contingent and located. Once we accept that our ways of knowing are partial, then we can find in this partiality new ways of dealing with differences that enable co-existence rather than domination or control.

The third chapter moves beyond questions of edibility, which, as the previous chapters have explored, is regarded as one of the fundamental markers of humanity. Humans are, in most systems of philosophy, inherently inedible when compared to the rest of animal life. This chapter begins by exploring the roots of the divide, which leads

to humans regarding themselves as exceptional with respect to animals but also with respect to other humans. The human is created, as philosophers like Giorgio Agamben observe, in relation, in difference, and in opposition to humanity and animality (*The Open; Homo Sacer*). Agamben labels the process through which this happens as the anthropological machine. The machine has been functioning since early times, notes Agamben, but in slightly different ways. In the early forms, the anthropological machine humanized animals to regard some humans as animals in human form. In the latter forms of the machine, or in the modern version, the human is created by regarding some as less than human by animalizing them. In *The Open: Man and Animal*, Agamben writes: “If, in the machine of the moderns, the outside is produced through the exclusion of an inside and the inhuman produced by animalizing the human, here [the machine of earlier times] the inside is obtained through the inclusion of an outside, and the non-man is produced by the humanization of an animal: the man-ape, the enfant sauvage or Homo ferus, but also and above all the slave, the barbarian, and the foreigner, as figures of an animal in human form” (37). Both these forms, the ancient and the modern, lead to discriminatory practices beyond species lines. As we can see, the machine’s operations are premised on creating essences to create hierarchies and differences between and beyond humans. In this respect, the machine is not natural nor entirely cultural. Instead, it is a sociohistorical phenomenon that disguises itself as natural by attributing value to aspects that may or may not be induced by nature, environment, or its relations with it. In other words, it creates the category of the human by separating nature from culture while devaluing the latter in the interests of those who gain an advantage from such categorization. The animal, in the context of the anthropological machine, becomes the constitutive outside and inside, as it delimits who can be considered human and less than human (Oliver 2). Although the anthropological

machine aids in the understanding of how some people are rendered as sub-human, less than human, inhuman, or even anti-human through their links to animality, it does not rent asunder the category of the animal, which is the origin point of various oppressions. As Mengozzi points out, the anthropological machine neglects the implications on animals and does not provide strategies to disrupt its operations (1). However, as other critics have noted, the anthropological machine as a concept and Agamben's insistence on disrupting it provide us with the impetus to go beyond it (Calarco, *Identity Difference Indistinction* 54). As Kelly Oliver has crucially observed, the extension of Agamben's argument leads us to questions such as: "how do we come to treat animals as animals?"; "how does animality justify enslavement and cruelty?"; "how the category of animality becomes beholden and subservient to humanity?" (2).

Significantly, theories of difference, such as the one provided by Jacques Derrida, have provided two key ideas, i.e., singularity and heteronomy. The first idea suggests that the Other, or the animal, as the beginning of the introduction explicated, cannot be reduced to a collective, subsuming their individuality, subjectivity, and differential uniqueness into an opposing mass. The second aspect of heteronomy dictates that we cannot conceive of ourselves without the presence of the Other, and all forms of relationality should begin not by centering the human but the animal, the more than animal, the life. In the words of Matthew Calarco, "An ethics of difference starts from the premise that the ultimate origin of ethics resides not with me (my rationality, my freedom, my autonomy) but with the Other, with radical difference, or heteronomy" (*Identity Difference Indistinction* 32). However, a theory of difference can lead to the flattening and homogenizing of difference rather than its multiplication and expansion (Calarco, *Identity Difference Indistinction* 47). What happens if we set aside the notion of difference itself? What kind of alternative thinking might emerge from this practice

of no longer trying to ascertain what distinguishes? The chapter seeks to answer this by reading Kurt Vonnegut's *Galapagos*. In doing so, it borrows primarily from Donna Haraway's concept of the cyborg and secondarily from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of becoming, which has a close affinity with the cyborg or companion species. This allows us to not just confuse boundaries but also construct ones that are more ethical and responsible than the ones that presently exist (Haraway, *Cyborg Manifesto* 7). This form of thinking and theorizing is also known as indistinction, wherein we leave aside our concern with anthropological differences, or the multiplication of differences, or its complication, or thickening, and start thinking by opening ourselves to the possibility that we are indistinct (Calarco, *Identity Difference Indistinction* 51). This form of thinking should not be confused with biological continuity since biology itself is a mode of thought, and akin to any other thought, it is not innocuous. It cannot be separated from the same sociohistorical and cultural processes that attend other thought modes. Vonnegut's *Galapagos* provides us with a glimpse of this form of indistinction, becoming, or cyborg figuration despite seemingly being rooted in Charles Darwin's theories of natural selection. It presents two timeframes, that of the 1980s and its near future to a million years later when humans have undergone modifications in their design, making them indistinct from aquatic mammals. Vonnegut's novel resists the conception of the human as disembodied and autonomous to imagine it as an assemblage of organic and inorganic bodies and forces. The novel destabilizes hierarchical binaries to give way to a transformed humanity that embraces the otherness within as well as the otherness outside to find harmony with nature and its life forms. Similar to other novels discussed in this thesis, Vonnegut's novel issues challenges to anthropocentrism but by extinguishing distinctions through timeframes beyond our conceptual apparatus.

Overall, the thesis strives to challenge anthropocentric logic through its interdisciplinary approach to advance animal justice issues and justice for those devalued and delimited by institutions, systems, practices, and thoughts that affect their ability to flourish. Taking the limit case, in the category of animals, enables us to think from the margins and have a vision from below. This thesis is a practice for those who emerge from the margins and can empathize with the marginal. We must contest the powerful elite, the fraction of humanity, who, at the expense of many, invent what is natural, what is aspirational, and what is indubitable. The boundaries created, inside and outside of humanity, result from an instrumental form of reasoning, which makes the Other expendable, replaceable, and a means to an end. The few cannot relegate the use-value of life to exchange-value.

2. CHAPTER TWO

Toward a Multi-Optic Vision

2.1 Race, Culture, and Animals in Ruth Ozeki's *My Year of Meats*

Jane Takagi-Little, the female protagonist of Ruth Ozeki's novel *My Year of Meats*, is a starving artist in her apartment in the East Village of New York City. In the midst of a freezing winter, unemployed, meat-less, and with her rent overdue, she sustains herself on a vegetarian diet of cabbage and rice. Frigidly lying in her bed since her boiler broke down, Jane wonders if she can find work as a documentary filmmaker in the rampant redundancy of New York. While she is wondering, the phone rings, and her old boss for a T.V. production company in Tokyo offers her a job on a show titled “My American Wife!” Jane jumps at the opportunity and writes a pitch for the show, which reads: “Meat is the Message. Each weekly half-hour episode of My American Wife! must culminate in the celebration of a featured meat, climaxing in its glorious consumption. It's the meat (not the Mrs.) who's the star of our show! Of course, the "Wife of the Week" is important too. She must be attractive, appetizing, and all-American. She is the Meat Made Manifest: ample, robust, yet never tough or hard to digest. Through her, Japanese housewives will feel the hearty sense of warmth, of comfort, of hearth and home—the traditional family values symbolized by red meat in rural America” (12). The show is sponsored by Beef Export and Trade Syndicate or BEEF-EX, a national lobby organization that represents “American meats of all kinds—beef, pork, lamb, goat, horse—as well as livestock producers, packers, purveyors, exporters, grain promoters, pharmaceutical companies, and agribusiness groups” (14). The BEEF-EX syndicate wants to market its meats to the Asian market and chooses Japanese housewives as a target audience to promote its products through the recourse of this

program.

The story intersperses Jane's first-person narrative with the third-person perspective of its other female protagonist, Akiko, the wife of Joichi Ueno (a.k.a. John Wayno), the representative of BEEF-EX and Jane's current boss. Akiko begins as a forced viewer of the program but becomes intrigued and moved when Jane starts directing the program. The program and Sei Shonagon's Japanese text "The Pillow Book" (c.1000) link the protagonists for most of the novel until they meet at the very end. 1991, the year of filming for this show, changes Jane's perception and literally "rocks your [her] world" (13) to the extent that she labels the year "My Year of Meats" (12). The viewing of the show changes Akiko's life as she resists and escapes her husband's hegemony. In both cases, the changes in perspective occur due to the breaching of the human-animal divide. Jane becomes aware of how primarily DES or Diethylstilbestrol, along with other antibiotics and hormones, adversely affect not just animals but also humans through them. In other words, she learns that we are what we eat. In Akiko's case, the "meat" that often rose to the surface, ending in her vomiting whatever she ate, is halted with the duplication and consumption of the Bukowski family recipe, "Hallelujah Lamp Chops" shown on the program (56). After eating the lamb, the "animal inside her" becomes "quiet", and ironically, she understands that she is not a piece of meat for her husband: that she is not passive fragmented flesh without subjectivity (97). While Akiko resists and escapes the domination of her husband by embracing the animal within and resisting the gendered dualisms that hierarchically divide society, Jane challenges the culture that obfuscates the interlinked oppression resulting from modern animal farming and its conversion of animals into commodities.

This essay analyzes how the novel resists and conforms to anthropocentric logic by demonstrating the material and semiotic links of one form of oppression to the other. In this sense, the reasoning that causes the domination, control, and slaughter of millions of animals is operative in the marginalization of humans premised on class, gender, or race. Various forms of discrimination, points out Calarco, are structured on “ideologies and institutions that grant full standing and privilege only to certain groups of human beings while excluding large swaths of humanity and the vast majority of animals and more-than-human others from consideration” or concisely on anthropocentric logic (*Beyond* 19).

2.1.1 Intersectional Oppressions

The show Jane opts to work for instructs her to travel to America in search of white, middle-class housewives who represent hegemonic attributes of American society. The memo Jane receives from the Tokyo Office cleaves women and their families based on desirable and undesirable qualities. Only desirable things, stipulates the memo, should be represented in the show, and all undesirable things must be avoided. The Tokyo Office provides a list which declaims:

DESIRABLE THINGS:

1. Attractiveness, wholesomeness, warm personality
2. Delicious meat recipe (NOTE: Pork and other meats is second class meats, so please remember this easy motto: "Pork is Possible, but Beef is Best!")
3. Attractive, docile husband
4. Attractive, obedient children
5. Attractive, wholesome lifestyle
6. Attractive, clean house
7. Attractive friends & neighbors
8. Exciting hobbies

UNDESIRABLE THINGS:

1. Physical imperfections
2. Obesity
3. Squalor
4. Second class peoples.

"MOST IMPORTANT THING IS VALUES, WHICH MUST BE ALL-AMERICAN" (12-13).

Initially, Jane merely modifies the list without contesting its inherent sexism, racism, and overall anthropocentrism. When Jane replies to the memo, she writes that “the wife who serves meat has a kinder, gentler mate” (13). Jane's note for her research staff reinforces discrimination based on occluded statistics. It declares, “market studies do show that the average Japanese wife finds a middle-to-upper-middle-class white American woman with two to three children to be both sufficiently exotic and yet reassuringly familiar” (13). As Jane wanders the American states searching for housewives who fit these categorizations, she realizes she must represent the “authentic” America (22). The director, Oda's hospitalization after an allergic attack to meat allows her to take charge of the show and create episodes that fulfill her desire to portray a multicultural America. Jane's desire emanates from her positioning as “racially “half”” (10), being the daughter of a Japanese mother and an American father. “Neither here nor there” (10), Jane has a keen sensitivity to forms of discrimination patterned on dualistic pairs such as man/woman, male/female, human/animal, black/white, subject/object, production/reproduction, culture/nature. The contamination of boundaries is encapsulated in Jane, who designates herself as “polysexual, polyracial, perverse” (10). John or Joichi's drunken comments further exemplify Jane's ability to blur fixed categorizations: “You, Takagi, are good example of hybrid vigor . . . We Japanese get weak genes through many centuries' process of straight breeding. Like old-

fashioned cows. Make weak stock. But you are good and strong and modern girl from crossbreeding. You have hybrid vigor” (32). The question of hybridity is also a primary concern in Julie Sze's critique of the novel where she argues that “technologically polluted bodies highlight how categories of race, gender, human/animal, and nature are unstable, shaped and contested by ideas and cultures, and through corporate industries which actively shape these categories through their products and processes” (793). Sze's analysis reveals that discriminatory practices cannot be examined in isolation and must be analyzed through their intersections with categories of gender, race, and nature.

While Sze's critique demonstrates the porousness of boundaries through the historical and narrative use of DES, my analysis intends to show how anthropocentric logic interweaves through systems of power to marginalize all except those considered properly human. In other words, rendering various animals in the novel into meat highlights the hierarchical relations external to humanity and internal to it. This happens due to the close associations of live and dead animals with race, gender, nature, and other classifications of difference. In order to explore the synergistic relations of different oppressions, I borrow the concept of “multi-optic vision” from Claire Jean Kim, who analyzes the multidimensionality of power. A “multi-optic vision” allows us to acknowledge various justice concerns and movements without foregrounding one and backgrounding the other. As Kim points out, multi-optic vision is “a way of seeing that takes disparate justice claims seriously without privileging any one presumptively” and “encourages a reorientation towards an ethics of *mutual avowal*, or open and active acknowledgment of connection with other struggles” (19-20).

2.1.2 Race Relations

Ozeki's novel puts race relations at the forefront, but, as several critics have noted, it celebrates America as a multicultural nation that buttresses its legacy in the form of a

progressive and dynamic nation. Monica Chiu argues that Jane's vision promotes a white post-national agenda through the fiction of the American Dream. Chiu explains, “the invisible, national (read: multicultural) ideology that the novel creates—a type of overculture—reconstitutes the very localized, national framework that it initially attempts to subvert” (101). Inclusion in a multicultural society is always conditional and subject to discarding those cultural elements that clash with the image of a progressive nation. Moreover, the pathway to a modern multicultural nation is dictated through neoliberal policies that transform most humans and animals into resources in order to rank them in terms of market value. This transformation enables the instrumentalization and objectification of all who are not deemed fully human.

One of the clearest ways to trace how the above discourses operate in Ozeki's novel is, ironically, through the Kudzu plant. After her boss's anaphylaxis and subsequent hospitalization, Jane takes charge of the show. She decides to shoot families that, in her eyes, are subversive and contest the notion of a white middle-class America. Her directorial debut featuring a Mexican family had already circumvented the BEEF-EX injunction of shooting only a particular demographic, i.e., white middle-class American women with two to three children. In her quest to represent difference and “introduce the quirky, rich diversity and the strong sense of individualism” of America, Jane visits Askew, Louisiana, to shoot the Beaudroux family (45). The Beaudroux family comprises twelve children, with ten of them adopted from developing regions of Asia, often where the American military had infiltrated. The family adopts “little Oriental babies from Korea and Vietnam who don't have anyone to care for them or buy them toys or educations” (48). The children of this family leave behind any troubling elements of their ethnicity and position themselves in accordance with American values, as can be deduced from their all-American names. Grace and Vern Beaudroux own a

Cajun-style restaurant famous for serving pig meat in Cajun-style baby back ribs. The place where they live is inhabited by Kudzu, which is considered an invasive species in America but, in Japan, is regarded as a prized crop. Kudzu notes Julie Sze “is used as a disparaging metaphor by American nativists for the economic “invasion” of the Japanese in the South” (801). While Sze recognizes the freedom and danger of transnational flows of people, cultures, and plants through the metaphor of Kudzu, she misses addressing the neoliberal logic mediating such flows. When Jane's cameraman, Suzuki, sees Vern and his sons pulling out Kudzu from the roof and walls, he is “dumbfounded” that Vern views the plant as a “predaceous” “opportunistic” “out of control” “invasive weed” (52-53). In response, Suzuki shows Vern how to turn Kudzu into starch and how to use the starch to thicken batters and sauces. Upon learning the uses of Kudzu, Vern goes out to the countryside with his kids to harvest Kudzu roots. Vern's experiments with the Kudzu roots result in him creating a “Kudzu based crispy chicken batter”, which he believes will win him the “State fair” (58). Vern is confident of turning the “old weed into a solid cash crop” (58). In the multicultural landscape of America, the acceptance of difference is based upon profitability as well as its potential for consumption by those in hegemonic positions. In this case, Kudzu, which stands for Japanese culture, is rendered useful only when its monetary value is ascertained and understood by Vern, a middle-class White American man. The Kudzu plant, its associated metaphors, and the bird that gets fried in its batter are all reduced in terms of their exchange-value while obscuring the powers that enable such an exchange. Further, if we look at the way Jane describes Kudzu, one can discern its links with race. Kudzu, writes Jane, is a hardy, versatile, and fecund plant that can “grow anywhere, even where other plants couldn't” (53). Claire Jean Kim points out that in the racialization of the invasive/native trope, “the construction of “invasives” as heedless, destructive, and

hyper-fertile aliens draws from white imaginings about nonwhite immigrants” where “invasives take on color, and nature as the space that they threaten is raced, too, as white” (152). The Kudzu plant and the immigrants are conjoined to demarcate the threat their presence poses to “natives” through the supposed pollution of race, economy, and environment.

The discourse of invasive species becomes even more interesting when we contextualize the history of America through non-human animals. The English colonists arrived in America with their domestic animals, animals not native to the region or to the indigenous human population. Michael Wise notes that the colonists “thought their domestic animals served as a cultural bulwark against the wilderness, against their fears that life in the wild New World would degenerate their bodies and souls” (126). Not only did the colonists let loose the pigs, sheep, and cows, but they hunted the native animal population relentlessly to near extinction, thus clearing the landscape for these animals. Their relationship with domestic animals, who became feral after they were let loose, allowed them to imagine themselves in contrast to American Indians, whom they deemed, ironically, as violent hunters (Wise). The construction of American Indians as violent and backward enabled the colonists to justify their mistreatment, subordination, and slaughter. The animals they let loose changed the ecology of the American subcontinent, disturbing the regional ecologies that had thrived for centuries. In this sense, the early colonists inverted the native/invasive trope and conflated the indigenous wild animals with American Indians. The colonist's anthropocentrism and its constituent racism have continued with one key difference: in the post-Darwinian era, animal life is not humanized as was done previously, and instead, human life is animalized. The modern anthropological machine, as Agamben argues, works to separate from within humanity the aspects that are deemed essentially animal (*The Open*). In both cases, the

distinction is employed to subjugate not only animals but also those who are associated with animals.

The wild, as a space that is pristine, untouched, and natural, was used to demarcate animality from humanity. The conceptualization of the wild by the privileged few eventually resulted in the creation of conservation laws that banned subsistence hunting while allowing hunting for leisure. The public was barred from accessing lands considered the habitats of wild animals. No longer self-sufficient, the indigenous population, as well as those who were self-employed farmers and artisans, were roped into the industries that made them “wage- laborers” at the end of the 19th century (Wise 132). This also resulted in the so-called domestic animals becoming the only acceptable source of meat. With the “Great Acceleration” a term referring to the post-1945 period, in which “every indicator of human activity underwent a sharp increase”, the increase in meat consumption became intertwined with economic development (Otter 476). In this phase, we see the rapid relocation of animals from pastures, barnyards, open fields, and ranches to industrial slaughterhouses where every aspect of their life is controlled. Ironically, the people laboring in the slaughterhouses are from the margins of society, and the kind of animal that is slaughtered and how it is transformed into meat and consumed is used to reinforce the hierarchy in society. Most humans and animals cannot escape the pervasive logic of neoliberal capitalism that enmeshes various discriminations in the name of productivity and progress.

In Ozeki's novel, the consumption of beef becomes the marker for distinction. Jane is employed to promote beef to Japan, acting as a “cultural pimp” between Japan and America (11). BEEF-EX represents the power of the U.S. as it expands its business to other regions in search of profit. Like McDonald's, KFC, or Coca-Cola, BEEF-EX advertises itself as a forebearer of American values that every country requires or

wishes for. Beef and its consumption, in the novel, symbolizes hegemonic attributes such as virility (2-3 children), attractiveness, wealth, leisure (exciting hobbies), patriarchal dividends, and a relaxed life. In creating these images, it obscures the processes that make these values aspirational and the processes that enable such families to afford such unnecessary and extravagant energy-dense diets. The issue with Jane's documentarian vision is that it leaves the logic behind the oppressions intact despite her best intentions. The Dawes family is a case in point to understand how a single optic colors Jane's vision.

Jane, in her search for diversity, reaches the small town of Harmony in Mississippi. Unlike the Beaudroux family, Miss Helen Dawes and her husband Purcell have nine biological children and live in an “unbelievably hot” town (70). Miss Dawes, Jane's primary contact in Harmony, is described by her as “a large woman, but lean and strong, and you could see the muscles running down her calves, underneath the thick nylon stockings” (80). One can argue that the invasive/native trope is merely displaced onto the Black family here. The Dawes family, similar to the Kudzu, symbolizes sexual robustness, hyper-fertility, hardiness, and an ability to withstand as well as prefer torrid degraded conditions. In the hierarchy of the novel, the African-Americans rank the lowest, and their foods/cuisines are also racialized. Before analyzing the foods of the community, I want to dwell on the representation of the community through the preacher delivering the sermon.

In Jane's multicultural vision of the world, where hybridity is to be celebrated, Harmony seems to be an exception. The town is entirely black and has no allusions to the intermingling of races or cultures. Helen Dawes recalls no white person entering the Baptist church of Harmony, but what is more remarkable is that she confuses Jane and Ueno for white people. This exemplifies the distance of the community from other

racism, as well as their seclusion. Further, the preacher's return after landing and quitting a job in the big city is glorified like the return of a prodigal son. The preacher washes away his "sickness" by embedding himself in the community once again and by steering clear of the sins (sins of the flesh, alcohol, and other sins) and seduction of the big city (78). His return to the church has delivered him from "sickness" and "temptation", and he wants the town to redeem themselves like he (78). While this return in the novel is depicted in a manner to celebrate kinship ties, familial bonding, sacrifices for the greater good of the community and humility, it hides the reality of the African-American experience. In a redundant America where work was hard to find for Jane, the preacher's return to his community signals the difficulty in securing and keeping a job in the insecure labor market. As Jenny Preece has elaborated, residential immobility enables people to access informal support networks used to manage insecurity. The work-life experience of the Black community in this neoliberal age is dictated by insecurity and doubt, and the preacher's return is an example.

Moreover, Jane's romanticizing of kinship networks of the Black community subtly contrasts it with the concept of individualism. Beverley Skeggs, in her pioneering ethnographic study, points out that "concepts of individualism legitimate powerful groups and render other groups unworthy of the designation 'individual'. Discourses of individualism have long been deployed in the service of political rhetoric to differentiate groups on the basis of inequality. 'Individuals' are the product of privilege, who can occupy the economic and cultural conditions which enable them to do the work on the self" (*Respectability* 163). The discourse of individualism constructs the modern self as free, autonomous, and independent, which modernist theories of justice and morality substantiate. The preacher's self is constructed in relation to the responsibilities, obligations, and duties to others. This self cannot embody

individualism and becomes the object against which individualism is defined. For instance, the Beaudroux family is individualized, as is evidenced by the detailed characterization of every child, in contrast to Jane's tour of Harmony, which ends in the reader only knowing the names of three people (Helen, Purcell, and their son Lewis). Everybody else is unnamed mass, indicating an essentialized Blackness, thereby contradicting the statement Jane's mother had made, which Jane too endorses: "Name is very first thing. Name is face to all the world" (10).

Joichi Ueno debars production of the episode featuring the Dawes family since hog maws, chitterlings, and chicken necks do not signify the American values the program intends to uphold. The intersection of animals and race becomes obvious once we recognize the patterns that link these categories. "Beef is best!" and "Pork is possible" is the motto on which the program must be based. The hierarchy that places cows at the top, followed by pigs and all other animals, also reflects social divisions of race and ethnicity. The reasons for exalting a particular animal over the other are often a combination of the economic, social, and biological. For instance, cows being polygastric animals are more difficult to rigidly control and intensely farm than monogastric animals such as chickens or pigs. Since the feed conversion rate of the latter monogastric animals is greater than that of polygastric animals, these animals are more numerous than cows. This also means that it is more expensive to raise cows than pigs or chickens, making the meat of cows more prized in society. The novel alludes to the Dawes family's difficulty in accessing meat but without raising the question of why meat should always be accessible or even be accessible, as scholars from Animal Studies argue. Animals and their cuts of meat highlight the power differences in society, and for the Dawes family, the meat they can afford illustrates their marginalization. The family feeds on pig intestines and chicken necks, parts of animals discarded during their

industrialized slaughter as waste. Chitterlings, in particular, is often associated with African-Americans and is widely regarded as a “dirty” food (Wallach, *America Eats* 175). The meats of animals signify the lowly status of African-Americans, as depicted in the novel through the Dawes family. Studies have shown that African-Americans are disproportionately likely to be among the 11.5 percent of Americans residing in “food deserts” where accessing good quality food is difficult (Wallach, “Food and Race” 361). The dislocation or decrease in grocery stores coincides with increasing levels of poverty, especially in black neighborhoods. The issue of access is evident in Joichi Ueno's conversation with Purcell and Helen, where he asks, “What about beef? You like beef?” (81). Helen's negative reply confuses Ueno, who inquires again, “No? But why you don't like it? Steak is most delicious” (81). Purcell's “apologetic” reply, “red meat is too costly with so many mouths to feed” confirms the cultural dominance of beef as the preferred meat in America (81). Food preferences also reflect race relations and Purcell's comments at the end of his conversation with Jane and Ueno demonstrate this aspect: “but to my mind, red meat ain't half so tasty as white” (81). However, in the novel, the depiction of African-Americans through food is stereotypical, with fried chicken standing in for Blackness. Akiko's travel to the American South on the Amtrak train establishes the racist perception of African-Americans as fried chicken lovers. On her trip South, Akiko takes the Amtrak, patiently awaiting her first experience of “Southern cuisine” (222). In Japanese trains, recalls Akiko, one was served “ekiben lunch boxes” featuring the regional specialties of the areas where the train traveled (222). Akiko hopes for the same in her American journey and to experience Southern cuisine. One must also note that the term Southern obscures the division along race lines, which divided cuisine. The word Southern codes white cuisine, while the term soul food decodes black dishes (Williams-Forson, “More than Just” 113). The Amtrak,

Akiko understands, serves no food, and one must go to the lounge car to get anything to eat. The lounge car sells only microwaved hot dogs or cold ham and cheese sandwiches. Akiko's disappointment with the American railway system does not last long, as the coach attendant Maurice, a “wiry black man,” enters into conversation with her (222). Maurice is portrayed as an amusing person who speaks in a “Southern drawl” and entertains the passengers while collecting garbage (222). After realizing that Akiko is Japanese, Maurice reveals to her the name of the express she has currently boarded, “The Chicken Bone Express”. The train is named so for two reasons: firstly, the African-Americans were banned from accessing restaurants or lounges of the train as per the Jim Crow laws, resulting in them preparing their own meals; secondly, the large-scale migration of Black families from the South was associated with litter, as a trail of chicken bones symbolized their departure to the North, where they expected jobs, education, and social equality. While some scholars have argued that African-American travel experience is conjoined with the consumption of chicken (Williams-Forsen, *Building Houses* 251), the ability to afford chicken for the poorer Blacks has always been a luxury. Jennifer Jensen Wallach, in her book on African-American foodways, notes, “If white society perceived African Americans as people who delighted in consuming chicken, it was because they structured society to make sure that such treats, which middle-class whites could take for granted, were exceedingly rare for the poorer classes” (*How America Eats* 174). Ironically, Maurice in the novel claims, “It's called the Chicken Bone, Miss A-KEE-kow, because all these poor black folks here, they too poor to pay out good money for them frozen cardboard sandwiches that Amtrak serves up in what they call the Lounge Car, so these poor colored folk, they gotta make do with lugging along some home-cooked fried chicken instead” (222-223). As Akiko is offered

“drumsticks and paper plates of potato salad and chips and pickles and drinks of soda”, questions of authenticity arise through the consumption of these articles (223).

Moreover, Akiko's entry into the U.S. should be considered as something other than normal. She packs her bags and flies to America without any restrictions, and such privileges can be enjoyed only by a fraction of humanity. Not only is the Japanese passport one of the strongest in the world, but it also represents the nation's wealth, where a seemingly ordinary person of Japan can travel to any country without hesitation. The anthropocentrism inherent in these practices cannot be dismissed, and Akiko's sampling of poor Black people's dishes is an instance of wealthier people of the world traveling to destinations in a quest for authenticity. The fried chicken, in this case, signifies a static and authentic culture for the wealthy traveler. While cultures are dynamic and elastic, the wealthy traveler's quest for authenticity can result in the reconstruction of less prosperous cultures and cuisines as unchanging. This occurs due to the spending or purchasing power of the wealthy, along with the essentializing of purportedly exotic cultures.

2.1.3 Marked Absence

The animal is defined in opposition to the human, and as Derrida elucidates, the definition operates in an essentially negative way by adjudging the animal as lacking whatever is presumed to be proper to the human. What is proper to humans is demarcated by a privileged few, who can easily attain these historically dynamic properties to exclude the rest by imbibing such properties with moral, social, and environmental value. Thus, those who are improper can be differentiated through their relations to animality. Generally, the animal is related to the human to discriminate against those who cannot fulfill the supposedly quintessential properties of humans, and history has shown the severity of such associations, from slavery to the holocaust. What

position the animals truly occupy in the anthropocentric order is nearly unimaginable. Operations of factory farming, animal agriculture, and other such operations often clarify the positions different animals hold. Humans, at least through their practices, desire to remove the animal within them and the literal animal outside them. Texts on the Anthropocene often allude to this aspect to make the public aware of the harms this logic generates. In Ozeki's novel, we have already seen the discrimination of race and ethnicity that occurs due to the association with animals. While animals often rank lowest in the stratification order, the order is always in flux, with pets sometimes ranking above some humans and animals being ranked hierarchically as well. For instance, megafauna always hold a privileged position among animals. The hierarchies that the anthropocentric order creates make who (or what) to save, whom to kill, whom to pet, and whom to eat a question of profitability for those who hold hegemonic positions in this order. Hegemony, as Connell has observed, is established only when there is a correspondence between the cultural ideal and the institutional ideal. While hegemony has an underpinning of violence, it functions by making successful claims to authority (Connell). The domination of animals, as we see throughout the globe, relies on people generally understanding them to be inferior and a means to an end. Although Ozeki's novel disturbs the anthropocentric order, it does not disrupt it, leaving intact the false logic structuring the order. This happens as a result of the unintentional exalting of certain animals at the expense of others.

Jane's first encounter with contamination happens on a scouting mission when Mrs Klinck serves Oda a Sooner Schnitzel, "made with thin cutlets of veal, dredged in crushed Kellogg's Krispies and paprika, then pan-fried in drippings with sautéed onions and sour cream" (41). Upon consuming this, Oda's throat constricts, and he starts to have an allergic reaction to the antibiotics that are extensively utilized in cattle. The

doctor explains: “Those calves live in boxes and never learn to walk, even—and the farmers keep them alive with these massive doses of drugs just long enough to kill them. What sent your director into shock was the residue of the antibiotics in the Sooner Schnitzel” (42). The antibiotic seeps into the flesh of the cows and then into the human body. This encounter paves the way for Jane to learn more about the biopolitics of food animals and how they affect human bodies. As Jane starts researching and learning through the knowledge of other families, such as the Dawes, the Dunns, and the lesbian family, and her own family and personal experience, she realizes the extent of animal manipulation, especially in cows. However, Jane's awareness should not be contrasted with her ignorance. In fact, Jane was always partially aware of the “toxicity in meat, the unwholesome-ness of large-scale factory farming, the deforestation of the rain forests to make grazing land for hamburgers” (219). Her ignorance, as she states, is willful and is based upon not acting on the knowledge that one has about the circumstances of others. She labels this form of ignorance as “doubling” or “psychic-numbing”, where one lives in a continual state of “repressed panic” and plays dumb to counter the “bad knowledge” (219-220). In other words, it is always difficult to position yourself against the hegemonic order regardless of whether their claims are justified or not. Moreover, I argue Jane does not really go against this order since bad knowledge infiltrates culture to the extent that thinking becomes curtailed. This is evident in Jane's acceptance of vegetarianism and in her avoidance of meat. For instance, vegetarianism accommodates the consumption of dairy products, and as Narayanan has pointed out, dairy production not only propels slaughter by discarding dry cows, male calves, and bulls but also through forced/repeated pregnancies of cows as well as through the controlled semen farms of eligible bulls (“Cow Protection”; “Cow Protectionism”). Jane's shift from forced vegetarianism at the beginning of the novel shifts to desired vegetarianism in the

end, but with one striking difference. The structures that allow meat to stay on the table and for industrialized slaughter to carry on remain intact. In Jane's case, her path to vegetarianism subtly hints at how the American economy views it as inferior while at the same time commodifying it in the name of the environment, organic farming, health, and lifestyle. When Akiko visits Jane in New York, she takes her to a Chinese restaurant where the chef fashions “mock beef out of wheat gluten,” which is “indistinguishable from the animal itself” (216). Plant-based meat alternatives, or PBMA's, as Hu et al. have studied, should not be considered healthy alternatives. They suggest that one must always be cautious in their intake of PBMA's since these are often ultra-processed foods that are calorically dense and often consumed in fast food settings with other processed items. The processing of PBMA's, as their study highlights, results in the loss of nutrients and phytochemicals naturally present in whole foods while also being higher in sodium, saturated fat, and heme (iron-containing molecule added from soy plants to replicate meat flavor), which is associated with higher risks of developing type 2 diabetes (Hu.et.al E1-E2). It is also important to consider that the American neoliberal policies are such that a few multinational corporations control all distribution and supply of meat. For instance, four companies (Cargill, Tyson Foods Inc., JBS SA, and National Beef Packing Co.) slaughtered 85 percent of the U.S. cattle (How Four Big Companies). Similarly, Tyson Foods, Pilgrim's Pride, Sanderson Farms, Koch Foods, and Perdue control about 60% of the U.S. chicken market (Douglas and Leonard, “Is the US Chicken”). This might also become the case for PBMA's, where companies like Impossible Foods and Beyond Meats might dominate the market, pricing out, buying out, or aggressively eliminating local competitors. Further, the consumption of PBMA's does not halt the consumption of meat; in fact, it might actually increase global meat consumption. Briscoe applies the paperless office paradox to the meatless menu

paradox, suggesting that PBMA's might aid in the overall consumption of meat.

Briscoe's argument is primarily based on environmental sociology, which dictates that "resource substitution can actually lead to an overall increase in consumption" (1). The displacement or disruption of meat as the privileged food source is necessary because the substitution only accentuates its place in the hierarchy.

Jane's concerns are not motivated by animal welfare, and the impacts on humans take precedence over her decisions to avoid meat. We can deduce it from her thoughts in which she states, "Of course I knew about toxicity in meat, the unwholesome-ness of large-scale factory farming, the deforestation of the rain forests to make grazing land for hamburgers. Not a lot, perhaps, but I knew a little. I knew enough" (219). Animals take a back seat in her thoughts and are only present through their relations to production and its environmental costs. One can argue that environmental production methods rather than animal welfare occupy Jane's thoughts. Bunny Dunn's phone call further emphasizes the novel's difference of perspective, where the Dunn family decides to call the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and FDA (Food Department of America). The anthropocentric logic of animals belonging to agriculture or being converted into food is not the primary point of contest in the novel, but the quality of the animal as a product is. Studies have shown that categorizing animals as food suppresses their moral status (Loughnan et al.). Despite the media-feeding frenzy Jane's documentary generates the questions accompanying its release are about "beef" scandals, the "unwholesomeness" of beef, or the diseases that may spread due to the abnormal production methods in factory farming. The scientific journalism that the author enmeshes in the novel concentrates on "cattle feed," practices of cow "feeding," and humans getting infected through animal diseases. What gets backgrounded is the animal since relations are reduced to matters of production.

The foregrounding of human interests by backgrounding ethical considerations for non-humans is evidenced in Jane's fax, which reads: "I have inadvertently discovered an unsavory side to the meat industry. I am talking about the use of drugs and hormones in meat production, which are being blamed for rising rates of cancer, sterility, impotence, reproductive disorders, as well as a host of other illnesses and harmful side effects" (138). Akiko's reply upon secretly reading Jane's fax highlights how the treatment of animals is backgrounded to the health concerns of humans, "Is the seed of meat-eating man weak from bad medicines, or perhaps he becomes not able to perform the sex act even? Please tell me answer to this important question" (141). The fax and Akiko's reply explicate the complications of hybridity. In one sense, it suggests that nature and culture are not separate entities since what one eats is always polluted and never pure or unadulterated as modern discourse proclaims. The human is thus shaped by hybridity, materially and semiotically.

Further, hybridity's rhizomatic relations allow analysis of intricately intertwined components but are often missed in hegemonic discourses of humans and animals. Scholars have utilized hybridity as a concept to expound on the blurring of technological and environmental boundaries in the form of drugs entering meat and then affecting us. However, hybridity, as a notion, also challenges the very consideration of animals as food. Because if man deems himself indistinct from nature and through nature from animals, he will have to reconsider humanity's operations in ethical and moral terms. The consequence will be the dismantling of hierarchies that have enabled unmitigated cruelty to animals as well as to large sections of humans who fight losing battles every day in every nation.

The cyborg in Haraway's thought represents the disintegration of boundaries and the mixing of what was seen as "fundamentally other or different and even antithetical"

(Schneider 61). Ozeki's novel is a step towards characterizing the hybridity of our present situations, but it retreats from demonstrating that aspect of hybridity where one can no longer be used to figure or create the other. In other words, the concept of hybridity will provide us with innovative examples of how to decode our complex worlds while at the same time recognizing our embeddedness in these worlds. Hybridity, thus, does not allow instrumental logic to supersede all logic since it reminds one that there are no differences of kind but only of degree.

In terms of human-animal relations, one may argue that only a superficial level of hybridity is achieved, not really resulting from the intermingling of opposite entities. This is evidenced in Akiko's consumption patterns. In contemporary Japan, rice, soy sauce, and seafood symbolize Japanese-ness, although these three ingredients represent an authentic Japan, which is a relatively recent phenomenon (Cwiertka 10). As with other societies before the "Great Acceleration" described previously, meat consumption was a luxury, and fish capture was relegated to coastal areas or those near rivers. In Japanese society, meat consumption was frowned upon, in part due to its Buddhist indictments of preventing needless bloodshed and also due to the utility of these animals in agricultural production. Otter observes, "In pre-Meiji restoration Japan, meat was consumed in very small quantities, but in 1871 Emperor Meiji eliminated the prohibition on meat-eating in the imperial household. This stimulated the importation of European breeds which were crossed with indigenous Japanese Wagyu cattle to produce, among other breeds, those responsible for Kobe beef" (478). The consumption of meat until very recently in Japan was limited by environmental, social, and religious factors. With increasing incomes, this has certainly changed, with more people being able to afford foods that were markers of class and luxury. The consumption of animal flesh had "remained very low and limited to game" (Cwiertka 24).

The novel also portrays Japanese people as predominantly fish eaters. For instance, Oh states, “we Japanese eat mostly fish” (61). Jane strengthens this perspective by declaiming, “the traditional Japanese diet has more fish than meat” (117). However, as we observed previously, this is a modern perspective and is dependent on a host of factors. When Akiko learns about the toxicity of meat, she reverts to making seafood cuisine. She deep fries young flounders and makes dishes out of “small calcium rich” fishes (147, 209). The gastronomic language used to describe the fish dishes further emphasizes the distance of these animals from other animals as well as from humans.

Studies have shown that concerns for animals are anthropocentric, where those who are phylogenetically similar to us are preferred to those who are not. Our efforts to understand and relate to animals are premised on our ability to relate to them, and humans often are better able to relate to mammals (Piazza 122). In the case of fishes, Melanie Joy points out that we often do not think of “aquatic animals as animals” and by extension as “sentient” beings (53). While research has demonstrated that fishes feel pain, suffer, are intelligent, and can register trauma, they, as Joy points out, appear “so fundamentally different” from us that their suffering remains invisible due to our perceived distance from them (56). For this reason, biodegrading practices of commercial fishing and aquatic farming are not deemed worthy of scrutiny, with government health organizations often prescribing fish in daily diets. Further, the contamination of human bodies through aquatic animals is well documented, e.g., Minamata disease in Japan. However, fishes often do not occupy pole positions in our thinking about contamination and pollution through hormones, pesticides, antibiotics, genetic modifications, or their escape to foreign water bodies. Anthropocentric logic rank orders different kinds of animals based on their similarities and differences to

arbitrary human properties, resulting in the exploitation, objectification, and instrumentalization of innumerable animals. Fishes are just one case where we can see how anthropocentrism structures our relationship to different animals. Birds, such as chickens and turkeys, categorized as food animals, also reflect this ambivalence in the novel. The appearance of these birds is merely as an article of food, without subjectivity and having lives reduced to meat. Through Akiko's vision, we see how the world in general, and the U.S. in particular, views these animals as delicious and fragrant fried chicken or as “golden, glazed, and resplendent” turkeys to be carved in the name of Thanksgiving feasts (221).

2.1.4. Conclusion

Ruth Ozeki's *My Year of Meats* is a step in the right direction since it strives to initiate a discussion on the consequences of corporate greed that rationalizes debilitating interventions into animal and human bodies in the name of productivity. However, the novel presents another form of discourse where the bodies upon which the politics is based are never directly referenced. The references that do permeate the novel are not of hybrid configurations that bring heterogeneous elements together. This does not require the status of the subject being imposed upon the animal, but understanding the active nature of participation of animals and humans. Ozeki's novel charts the border war between animals and humans in terms of women's oppressions, gender, race, and technologies of manipulation. However, it stops short of revising actions in a holistic manner and does not depict the animals in a manner that enhances their ways of becoming. The unitary identity of animals is hardly displaced, but through its absence or metaphorical representation, the questioning of gender-based issues is enabled. A multi-optic vision, like the cyborg figuration, is about coalition, affinity, and not original identities. Haraway's figure of the cyborg elucidates how the “machine and the

organism are each communication systems joined in a symbiosis that transforms both” (*Haraway Reader* 299). Symbiotic relations can occur only if we take into account our implications in a complex and contradictory world while recognizing our shared conditions and vulnerabilities with all of Earth’s others. Two instances would elucidate the points hybridity would have answered if it was given genuine consideration. One, it would require a reading that does not just suggest what is absent but what could be present. Jane’s documentary editing session is a good moment to analyze the affects generated throughout the novel, which subsume animals. Jane’s forwarding and rewinding of her video, where a cow is hung upside down and butchered at the end of the novel, makes her cry. However, the cluster of affects that coalesce her into crying are not mentioned in detail, and are avoided. The watching of cow slaughter several times causes her to cry “sometimes”, but in the next few pages, it seems it is not exclusively the watching of gore and violence on the animal that may have caused this effect. Rather it could be due to Sloan, her boyfriend, or due to the child she lost, the cold apartment without heating, or due to “six hundred dollars a week to rent the crappy editing decks and the monitors” (214). The question of whether all these affects are equal to the institutionalized butchering of cows is difficult to answer, so Ozeki facilitates a willed ignorance discussed previously. After all, it seems that whatever the form of death, a willed ignorance may be exercised when needed. For instance, the conversation Jane has with the police substantiates the argument that the hybridity achieved in the novel is not necessarily of contradictory positions but of a lack of affinity derived from a willed ignorance. A willed ignorance that ignores how unwilling one may be in the presence of such large-scale animal deaths. The conversation with the police goes like this:

“Lady said it sounded like there was animals being slaughtered down here or something,” the cop reported.

“Yes,” I agreed. “She’s right.” I showed the scene to the cop and his partner, two big, beefy Polish guys from Long Island; like most cops on the Lower East Side, they commute from the suburbs to police the inner city.

“How can you watch that stuff?” the cop said, screwing up his baby face.

“I don’t know.” I shrug. “How can you eat it?” I rewound the tape, sucking the screams back into the cow’s throat, along with the blood.”

“Hey, that’s kinda neat,” said the cop’s partner. “Like you’re God or something.” He shook his head, suddenly somber. “I’ll tell you, I sure wish I could do that sometimes.”

“Yeah,” I agreed again. “So do I.” (213).

In other words, Ozeki’s novel does not witness deaths, as the succeeding chapter explains. It does not stay put in the face of horror, thereby allowing the movement of a bounded self to witness the relationality we share in the form of pain, screams, shrieks, suffering, and vulnerability. It instead moves away, makes it a neat trick, and ignores the history of animal exploitation. It affects the eternal return of the same by substituting the idea of mindfulness instead of a change in the action itself. The cow keeps returning as we wind and unwind the tape, a representative of cows without history and materiality except as food. We are unable to see the return of what is not same, the difference between this cow and the various others that are marched towards deaths. What should return however is the difference, the becoming- animal of both us who spectate on deaths, and those whose lives which exceed reduction to foods.

2.2 Intertwined Oppressions in Michel Faber's *Under the Skin*

Michel Faber’s *Under the Skin* presents a science fiction world where men are farmed for meat by aliens. The female protagonist of the novel, Isserley, works for Vess Incorporated, an alien farming operation that specializes in converting human flesh into marketable delicacies for the elite of her home planet. Having undergone surgical

modifications to her body to allow her to pass for a woman of Earth, she lures unsuspecting men into her car. Cruising the Scottish Highlands, she is shown to be on the hunt for muscular men, and as the plot thickens, we realize that the hitchhikers she picks up are to be turned into gourmet products for the upper classes of her world. The slaughter of the men captured by Isserley takes place at Ablach Farms, a desolate spot owned by Vess Incorporated in rural Scotland. In the novel, men are transformed into meat through a discourse that constructs them as the metaphysical other of the aliens, depriving them of language and reason, traits considered typically human. The aliens adjudge themselves as superior creatures based on abstract properties that they declare are absent or lacking in humans to rebrand humans as “dumb animals” and place them in factory farming operations (237). The aliens label the humans as “vodsel”, which, according to Hortle and Stark, is the novel's term for “human food animals” derived from “a close variation of the Dutch word “voedsel,” which describes food” (10; see also Vint, 2). This interpretation is premised on the biographical elements of the author. The author was born in the Netherlands to Dutch Baptist parents who emigrated to Australia when Faber was seven (Jordan, “I would have been different”). Scholars have noted that the categorization of animals as food leads to a reduction in their perceived capacity to suffer, which in turn diminishes our moral concern toward them (Bratanova et al. 195-196). In this sense, the alien's categorization of humans as food in the novel serves as an analogy for our treatment of non-human animals as meat. Gymnich and Costa have highlighted this aspect of the novel, writing that in “Isserley's view of the world, human beings have the status of cattle, and the way the men caught by Isserley are treated by the aliens can be read as a cultural-critical metadiscourse of the way human beings treat animals in the meat industry” (85). Western meat production and consumption become the target of Kirsty Dunn's insightful article on the novel, where

she addresses the impacts of Western meat-eating practices and the mechanisms by which these practices are naturalized. Dunn argues that Faber's novel exposes how meat production is legitimized through physical and linguistic separation (152-157).³ The practice of industrialized slaughter was also a cause of concern for the author, who, when reflecting on the novel, wrote that he wanted to address the “horror of factory farming” (Faber, “Changed my life”).⁴ Further, critical scholarship has also analyzed the novel through a philosophical lens to deconstruct the boundaries between the human and the animal (Dillon; Calarco). For Dillon, the ontological distinction between humans and animals premised on language is challenged by the trans-speciated protagonist Isserley. Drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's theories of becoming, Dillon argues that Isserley's movement between identities enables her to inhabit the limits between the human and the animal, thereby subverting human-animal dualism (Dillon). Meanwhile, Calarco reads Isserley's life and death as an affirmation of our embeddedness in the world alongside other lifeforms. Calarco argues that an ethics of belonging entails acknowledging our shared conditions and vulnerabilities as well as our indistinction from the wide variety of beings (“Belonging to this world”). These studies, although by no means exhaustive, provide instructive examples of how scholars have responded to the complex hierarchical relations of humans and animals in the

³ In her reading, Dunn states that physical separation obscures the objectified animal from the consumer, while linguistic separation conceals the subjectivity of an animal through a discourse that commodifies them.

⁴ However, Faber also maintains that his novel was not about 'the evils of meat eating but about the evils of evading moral responsibility' (Faber “Changed my life”).

novel.⁵

While studies on the novel have contested the logic of anthropocentrism in relation to non-human animals, they have missed addressing that aspect of anthropocentrism which operates within the human order. Anthropocentrism refers to a set of institutions, practices, and systems that grant a privileged status to only those who are deemed fully human, resulting in the subjugation of animals as well as the marginalization of large groups of humanity. In his book on Environmental Humanities, Matthew Calarco points out that anthropocentric logic protects, establishes, and reproduces the interests of “a fraction of humanity” while excluding most animals and humans from consideration (*Beyond* 18-19). Although scholars have critically engaged with the novel to remark on the anthropocentric logic structuring human-animal relationships, they have not explored those systems of power rooted in the social constructions of gender and class that marginalize humans and aliens (who consider themselves humans).

This article, broadly conceived in two sections, intends to highlight the intersections of class and gender in the hierarchical valuing of the characters in *Under the Skin*. The first section explores how the female protagonist's appearance and employment position her as working-class. We utilize Beverley Skeggs' ethnography on working-class women to demonstrate how Isserley's appearance and occupation are attributed negative value. Working-class women and their bodies have a long history of being represented as out of control and in excess (Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*). When

⁵ For critiques on other aspects of the novel, such as on the tenuous construction of reality, the problematics of empathy, the links of sexual predation, hunting, and disability, and the connection of disability and work see respectively: Caracciolo (“Murky Mercy”); Kark and Vanderbeke; Hortle and Stark; Murray.

Isserley passes for a woman of Earth, we argue that her appearance in the novel is represented by excess. Further, Isserley is also aware of her class position and its negative connotations within her society. In light of the negative connotations, Isserley attempts to escape class identifications by differentiating herself from members of her race through the discourse of improvement. Isserley distances herself from other workers on the basis of her occupation, which she thinks accords her a greater social standing compared to the workers who, in her mind, cannot improve upon their lives. However, Isserley fails in her attempts to deny her class identity through the improvement discourse because the value she invests in her occupation is never legitimized in the novel.

The second section highlights how class and gender intersect in the novel to create a matrix of power relations that position groups of men in a hierarchy. The novel, set in an underprivileged part of Scotland, presents us with individuals who cannot comply with their society's conventions of manhood. Dominant versions of masculinity are constructed in opposition to women and subordinated men. However, structures external to the gender order, such as race and class, can also create relations of marginalization between men. In these contexts, marginalization refers to “the relations between the masculinities in the dominant and subordinate classes or ethnic groups” (Connell 80). The novel, written in the 1990s, coincides with a period in Britain where uneven economic development led to large-scale job losses for men in the industrial sector, distancing them from hegemonic forms of masculinity. Throughout the novel, Isserley is on the lookout for men who are unemployed, single, and vulnerable, factors that, in our view, are consistent with the condition of the working-class men who have suffered the impacts of automation and the downsizing of industrial sectors during the last few decades.

Furthermore, the members of Isserley's race, or the aliens, are classified in the text as 'humans' and take on the mantle of humans (60). They are also depicted in a hierarchical fashion, where the ones employed in manual labor are regarded as “dumb goons” (127), “Estate trash” (122), and “subhuman” (52). In addition to their low economic status, the factory farming operations in the novel cause physical impairments in both the aliens and the humans. Ablach Farms jeopardizes the physiques of these working-class men and aliens, distancing them from their society's ideals of manhood. We explore the marginalization of these men due to the fragmentation of material and semiotic structures through which they traditionally asserted authority, whether by means of their body or by being a breadwinner, staying employed, and married.

2.2.1 Isserley's Predicament

In order to escape a “short lifetime” in the deplorable conditions of “New Estates”, Isserley accedes to being physically modified for Vess Incorporated (64). The body alterations that allow her to pass for a woman and hunt men for her employers also cause her to experience debilitating pain. The novel is littered with passages that describe the excruciating pain Isserley suffers as a result of the surgeries she has undergone. The surgeons of her race amputate her backbone and insert metal pins into it so that she resembles the bipedal and vertical movements of vodsels (127). Throughout the novel, the reader is made aware of her persistent backaches that keep her “hostage in her bed with the threat of needle-sharp pains” (49). After the alterations to her body, Isserley feels like a “mutilated cripple” who is “trapped in a cage of her own bone and muscle” (284, 143). Esswis, her immediate superior, is the only other person who can relate to her predicament since he has endured similar modifications. The narrator suspects that Esswis's surgeons “had done a worse job on him experimenting with techniques they didn't perfect until Isserley came under the knife” (150). The paralyzing

pain that Esswis and Isserley suffer every day further emphasizes how extreme was their desire to escape the conditions of the New Estates.

The New Estates or Estates, as we argue later in the article, are analogous to the estates of Britain that spatially fix those who are stigmatized as having little social value. Lynsey Hanley has argued that class can also be reproduced through spatial exclusion and that the history of estates in Britain correlates with how the industrial working class was distanced from the rest of the public (18-21). The New Estates of the novel is a “monstrously ugly” structure distant from the wealthier classes where “decay and disfigurement” is par for the course (86, 64). Aliens in the New Estates are physically and metaphorically excluded from society on the basis of their class. Isserley is positioned as working class because she, despite her physical beauty, gets “petted and then discarded” by the Elites of her race to a life in the Estates (164). After three days in the Estates, Isserley accepts Vess Incorporated’s offer, thereby ending her prior belief, impressed upon her by Elite men, that “her passage into a bright future was a matter of physical inevitability” (67). Isserley’s modifications alter her appearance in a manner that she does not look dissimilar from or any worse than “the worst Estate trash” (64). Isserley’s placement in the New Estates and the subsequent surgical impairments, which equate her appearance with the members of the New Estates, position her as working class.

Further, we utilize Beverley Skeggs’ ethnography on working-class women in Britain (*Class, Self, Culture; Respectability*) to outline Isserley’s social positioning and how it operates irrespective of the linguistic inversion that classifies aliens as humans and humans as animals. We contend that Isserley is othered based on her appearance and employment, both of which are problematic markers of gender and class in the novel.

Excess

Isserley's occupation revolves around driving through the Scottish Highlands and capturing those who are rejected from society. The Scottish Highlands, one can argue, is an apt setting for Isserley to carry out her task since popular perception has constructed this region as socially and economically backward with respect to the rest of Britain (McCullough).⁶ The novel was written in the late 1990s when poverty and depopulation severely affected the area, which might be one of the reasons why the novel features nameless people hitching a ride.⁷

Scholars have interpreted Isserley's process of capturing hitchhikers in the novel as a "hunt" (Dunn; Hortle & Stark). In these studies, Isserley is regarded as a "seductive hunter" (Dunn 152) or even an "unconventional sexual predator" (Hortle & Stark 4). Feminist theorists have delineated the connection of hunting with sex and women with animals, arguing that the discourse of hunting is rooted in symbolic systems that value predation and dominance (Kalof et al.). Although Isserley passes as a woman on Earth, she is embroiled in a traditionally masculine activity of hunting⁸, which Hortle and

⁶ McCullough has noted that the Highlands and Islands of Scotland were historically considered by outsiders as problem areas where poverty was a consequence of cultural inferiority. The sustained structural economic support provided by the European Union since the 1980s has helped develop the area and alleviate poverty. Since the early 2000s, the Highlands and the Islands have seemingly left behind their problem status and can be recognized as developing peripheral regions (McCullough).

⁷ In his work on hitchhiking, Laviolette argues that in the British context, the hitchhiker is "travel beggar" whose taking to the roads is a "declaration of necessity" (8).

⁸ We concur with Hortle and Stark, and Dunn's interpretation that Isserley is a hunter. However, if Isserley's process of tranquilizing men is to be regarded as a hunt, an overarching

Stark have argued affords her “a form of predator’s sexual pleasure” (4). In addition, the manner in which she picks out the men is referred to as “cruising” (4, 71; Hortle & Stark 4) or “kerb- crawling” (Murray, work as cure section), both acts which involve the soliciting of casual sexual partners or prostitutes in public places. The sexual references, combined with the notion that Isserley is a hunter, fix her as a dangerous and sexual other on Earth.

Significantly, Skeggs argues that the working class has been historically represented as sexual, dangerous, and excessive, with working-class women’s bodies often portrayed to be in excess (*Respectability; Class, Self, Culture*). Skeggs writes, “to read something (a body or object) as excess is to render it beyond the bounds of propriety, to locate it within the inappropriate, the matter out of place, the tasteless” (*Class, Self, Culture* 100). Such a reading also highlights how propriety, a middle-class attribute, is established in society. In Isserley’s case, excess is embodied through her surgically altered breasts that sit uncomfortably on her “little” body (12, 29).⁹ Isserley’s

definition is required such as the one provided by Robinson and Bennett: ‘the capture by humans of wild mammals, birds, and reptiles, whether dead or alive, irrespective of the techniques used to capture them’ (2). This eliminates concerns that a hunt must end with the killing of an animal. Isserley’s hunt is neither for subsistence nor utility, and it becomes a strange combination of two forms of hunting: sport and commercial. Employed by Vess incorporated, she is bound to deliver the muscular men she captures for processing at Ablach farms, but she is also overwhelmed by the thrill of the hunt. At various instances in the novel, we find correlations with sport hunting made clear by the ‘quickenings’ of her breathing upon approaching a male hitcher (17), her ‘excitement’ (29), her ‘adrenaline’ rush (17, 30-31) and her ‘appetite for the game’ (49).

⁹ ‘Five foot one, maybe, standing up’, surmises the first hitchhiker (9).

breasts are grafted on her by surgeons of her race and are based on magazine pictures that are sent to them by Esswis. The narrator describes the unnaturalness of her breasts, stating that they are “mounds of flesh,” “stones on her chest,” bulging “artificial tumors,” or a “repugnant cleavage of artificial fat” (250, 279). Isserley feels encumbered by her breasts and wishes to remonstrate with Esswis about their unrealistic size (178). The internal monologues of the hitchhikers picked up by Isserley also depict her breasts as physically excessive. Most of these hitchhikers (nine out of ten) remark on the excessive size of her breasts and form value judgments based on Isserley’s appearance.

It is, therefore, ironic that Isserley, despite disliking her breasts and acknowledging that “real life wasn’t at all like the smooth images celebrated by magazines and television”, still proceeds to let herself “be examined in earnest” (68, 11). She pushes her “breasts out” so that the hitchhikers can “ogle her undetected” (121, 11). Hortle and Stark point out that Isserley “offers up her body to the heterosexual male gaze” to lure “suitable” specimens (5). One might even suggest that Isserley is not concerned with her appearance since she is an alien. However, Isserley is aware of the judgments and responses that her breasts in a “low- cut top” would elicit (52), for otherwise, why would she “obscure her breasts” whenever she feels threatened by a hitchhiker (34, 177). Isserley tries to avoid the humiliation and danger that her appearance exposes her to (37-39), negating the assumption that her appearance does not matter to her.

When Isserley passes for a woman of Earth, it is not just as any woman, but as a woman who has the devalued cultural markers of the working- class. Isserley’s characterization contains many of the items that Skeggs has listed in the representational pathologizing register of working-class women, such as they have no

taste, are physically excessive, immoral, shameless, sexual, vulgar, are unable to raise children properly, and are located in the estates (*Class, Self, Culture* 112). The interior monolog of the last hitchhiker succinctly summarizes some of the pathologizing representations that Isserley's appearance generates: "Tits on display to show she wasn't ready to give up being sexy yet, but the rest of her beaten and worn down, prematurely old. Did she have two screaming toddlers waiting for her at her parent's place? Was she some sort of addict? A prostitute struggling to find an alternative way of making ends meet?" (264).

For working-class women, femininity¹⁰ is something that they cannot comfortably inhabit since their relationship with it is constructed by positioning them as vulgar, sexual, tasteless, and pathological (Skeggs, *Respectability*). One of the ways class identity is marked on Isserley's body is through the interior monologs of the hitchhikers. In these monologs, Isserley's body is devalued by sexualizing it to the point of vulgarity. For instance, Isserley is a "Page three material", a "half Baywatch babe", who breathes "like a bitch in heat", speaks like "easy girls", and has sex "on the brain" (181, 12, 34, 121, 179). Although not all hitchhikers adjudge Isserley so disparagingly, seven out of the ten hitchhikers in the novel, after being picked up, either contemplate having sex with her or think that her appearance itself is a pretext for sex. While these judgments code Isserley as visibly excessive, they also serve to highlight the sexist attitudes of the hitchhikers. Most of the hitchhikers, as critics have pointed out, are "too disagreeable" to evoke sympathy (Caracciolo 596), as well as being "despicable" in

¹⁰ Femininity is the 'process through which women are gendered and become specific sorts of women' (Skeggs, "Toilet Paper" 297). Working class women make investments into femininity to demonstrate their respectability, and avoid or deflect associations of sexuality, vulgarity, and pathology (Skeggs, *Respectability*).

their behavior (Kark & Vanderbeke 13). Some of the hitchhikers (particularly hitchhikers 1, 3, 6, and 8 in order of appearance in the novel) display a “primitive, disrespectful and predatory attitude” toward Isserley (Kark & Vanderbeke 13).

Further, Kark and Vanderbeke argue that Isserley’s previous experiences confirm that predatory and misogynistic behavior is “widespread among her victims” (13). This also means that the hitchhikers who devalue Isserley based on her body and appearance are, in turn, attributed negative values themselves through their representations. Most of the hitchhikers, who also happen to be unemployed and at the margins of society, through their inner thoughts, comments, and actions, become associated with excessive sexuality, danger, and even degeneracy. In a couple of cases, the potential danger of the hitchhikers is made literal, emphasizing that the threat posed by these outcasts to Isserley is real. As historical studies have shown, a long heritage of representations that devalue, demonize, and hold the working class responsible for social problems exists in Britain (Skeggs, *Respectability* 76). The representation of the hitchhikers is problematic because they are based on processes of inscription that fix those at the other end of the social scale as immoral, criminal, sexual, or vulgar. That is why we find most hitchhikers to be disreputable characters who are predatory, inebriated, or obsessed with sex. The working class is coded and known through negative moral evaluations such as sexuality, contagion, danger, vulgarity, poverty, pathology, waste, and pollution (Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*). While we have elaborated on some of these moral evaluations and how they are reproduced in the characterization of Isserley (and to some extent in the hitchhikers), the other elements involved in the coding of the working- class are also present in the novel.

Disidentification

Beverley Skeggs's ethnography demonstrated that working-class women put forth numerous efforts not to be recognized as working-class since the label working-class when applied to them signified all that is dangerous, sexual, and without value (*Respectability* 74). Skeggs notes that working-class women "disidentified" and "dissimulated", refusing recognition rather than claiming the right to be recognized (*Respectability* 74). Working-class women attempt to "escape class identifications through discourses of improvement and strategies of passing" as the representations of their positioning constantly devalue them (Skeggs, *Respectability* 75). However, Skeggs argues, drawing on Bourdieu's concepts, that working-class women often fail in their attempts as they do not have the power to convert cultural capital into symbolic capital (*Respectability*). According to Skeggs, "class was configured through the improvement discourse because in order to improve they had to differentiate themselves from those who did not or could not improve. They were continually making comparisons between themselves and others, creating distances and establishing distinctions and tastes in the process" (*Respectability* 82).

In this section, we explore how Isserley disidentifies by differentiating herself from members of her race through the discourse of improvement. Isserley is aware of her class position, and she understands that in her society, everything is a "matter of hierarchy and privilege" (258). This awareness of her place in society makes her feel insecure, which is why she experiences "pangs of failure" and remains doubtful of ever being "indispensable" and "invaluable" (40, 71, 74). The novel portrays her as a "desperate" individual, a woman who is desperate to leave the New Estates and then, when she does, of having a job on earth that only desperate people would have considered (63, 72). In light of the negative connotations, Isserley strives to deny, refuse, and escape her class identity by constantly making comparisons between herself

and those who supposedly are worse than her and cannot improve. This attempt to differentiate herself from members of her race occurs even though the narrator does not find Isserley any different or much worse than the worst estate trash in appearance. The narrator further notes that if Isserley had stayed in the Estates, she would be indistinguishable from all the “losers and low-lives” who toil in “filth like a maggot among other maggots” in factories and industrial plants (65). For Isserley, the ability to freely wander the Scottish Highlands becomes the primary source of difference between her and the members of her race. She uses this distinction to highlight her value and proclaim what she is not rather than what she wishes to be. Since she is free to roam the Earth, she is not a “lower -life form” as only they can adjust to living and working underground (113). Another manner in which Isserley creates distance between herself and the workers is through her job. As the narrator points out on her behalf, her job is subtle and complicated and requires a “lot of brain work” involving learning “everything from first principles” (153). Nevertheless, her job is not something “a linguist would ever have applied for” since it is by default for desperate prospectless people (63), implying that her place in the social hierarchy will never be valued positively. The social hierarchy in the novel works in a manner in which the comparisons that Isserley makes with the farm workers, laborers, process and factory workers not only stereotype them as dumb brutes but also position them as incapable of improvement. In Isserley’s view, these men cannot understand the sophistication of her work since they are “thick”, “stupid”, “dim-witted” “Estate trash” and only capable of manual labor (58, 59, 82, 154). For most of the novel, Isserley believes that her work is essential to the functioning of Vess Incorporated and that nobody would endure such painful physical modifications to do what she does. The value she invests in her job allows her to attribute moral worth and respectability to herself. Isserley maintains that,

unlike the laborers, she is not a “slave” and does a job “no -one else could do” (50, 62). However, later on in the novel, during a conversation with Amlis Vess, the son of the owner of Vess Incorporated, Isserley is informed that she is replaceable and a means to an end. Amlis Vess explains to Isserley that his father will “just send somebody to take your [Isserley’s] place. There are hundreds of people begging for the chance” (242). This confirms Isserley’s horrifying fear that she and the laborers are like pieces of “equipment” (152, 256), equally disposable and replaceable. Isserley fails to escape her class identity through the discourse of improvement since she never really has access to the right kind of knowledge, or cultural capital, that can be legitimized into symbolic capital. In other words, Isserley’s skills and life experiences are never legitimated within the power networks of the novel, rendering her job and life without value. In the end, ironically, Isserley dies doing her job, for which she had sacrificed her body to escape a short lifetime in the Estates. *Under the Skin* presents a pessimistic view of Isserley’s life, where she can neither avoid the pathologizing representations of the working class nor accrue economic or cultural capitals that have any symbolic exchange value.

2.2.2 *Less than Human*

Carol J. Adams has examined the connection of violence against animals through the concept of an “absent referent”, which functions to deny the subjectivity of the individual literally by butchering them or by renaming them and their dismembered parts into commodities (66). Ironically, in *Under the Skin*, men are made absent, literally and metaphorically, through butchering and through a language that renames them into fragmented body parts. These anonymous hitchhikers are rendered into cuisines such as steaks and sausages, thus stripping them of any identity except as meat to be processed. Interestingly, the distinction between the aliens and the hitchhikers is

based on a lack wherein the vodsel cannot do “any of the things that really defined a human being” (136). Western philosophy has defined the animal as deprived of “what is “proper to man””, which comprises a never-ending set of concepts and is never limited to a single trait (Derrida, *The Animal Therefore* 5). Scholars have analyzed the novel, primarily through the hybrid figure of Isserley, as an attempt to deconstruct the modes of thought patterned on human/animal dualisms (Calarco, “Belonging to this world”; Dillon; Dunn). These studies dispute the notion of the human as a coherent and bounded entity isolated from animality and defined in opposition to it. The futile search for an anthropological difference is evident in how Isserley categorizes the hitchhikers she picks. The distinction between Isserley and the hitchhikers is based on skills and attributes that are not intelligible to us. According to her, there is a “tendency to anthropomorphize” the actions of a vodsel, although the fact is that they “couldn't siuwil, they couldn't mesnishtil, they had no concept of slan . . . they'd never evolved to use hunshur; their communities were so rudimentary that hississins did not exist; nor did these creatures seem to see any need for chail, or even chailsinn” (136). The lives of the captured hitchhikers become meaningful only in the context of being consumed by the aliens. Moreover, the unemployed human hitchhikers are labeled as “beasts” (82), signifying their inhuman or less-than-human status, justifying their exploitation and eventual slaughter at the hands of those in power.

The slaughter of hitchhikers in the institutionalized setting of Ablach Farm indicates their absolute separation from aliens. In his essay on animal deaths, Garry Marvin categorizes two kinds of killings: domestic and wild, classifying the latter as hunting. In domestic killings, the animal is placed under the control of humans, and its death can be categorized as either “mechanical or medical” (Marvin 16). The deaths of the animals in such spaces are orderly, predictable, and routine. Another fundamental

feature of such killing is its unchallenged nature, where the animal cannot flee from its fate and is entirely defenseless against it. In this sense, the gruesome killing of the hitchhikers for Vess Incorporated is comparable to the kind of animal slaughter that occurs in confined animal feeding operations or CAFOs. The hitchhikers Isserley captures once confined to Ablach Farms must submit themselves to the same manipulations that a farmed animal undergoes, exemplified through their systematic professional deaths at the hands of the “Chief Processor” Unser (211). Unser's killings are surgical, illustrated through his use of medical equipment and jargon. He “minimizes the trauma”, “cauterizes the bleeding”, and searches “incontinent blood vessels” as his scalpel makes “rapid, delicate” incisions (213-215). Clinical and mechanical killings of this sort can be called “cold deaths” (Marvin 17) due to the impersonal and detached manner in which they are carried out. Unser succinctly points out the nature of this form of killing when he states, “Feelings don't enter into it” (219).

However, it is worth noting that the killing of humans by aliens is not indiscriminate like the industrialized slaughter of animals. It instead functions on Isserley ascertaining whether the men are out of place socially and if their absence would go unnoticed. The deaths of hitchhikers become categorically different from domestic killings if they occur outside Ablach Farms. In a particular instance in the novel, Amlis Vess, the son of the owner of Vess Incorporated, aids the escape of a few vodsels from the farm. Amlis, portrayed as a vegan and a defender of animal rights, disagrees with his father's meat processing and marketing operations since he does not “believe in killing animals” (114). But once outside the farm, Isserley and her supervisor Esswis treat the vodsels Amlis lets loose as pests or pest-like. The escape of the vodsels evokes emotional reactions in Isserley and Esswis, such as irritation (95), anger (96), worry (97), or relief and excitement on finding and shooting them (102-

107). The killing of pests is viewed as “hot deaths” due to the emotional reactions they provoke against the animals (Marvin 17-18). The animals in these situations are regarded as “polluting” or “destructive”, and as violating the “local cultural order” (Marvin 17). The hitchhikers who run away are deemed to be in places where the aliens consider they should not be, and if they are not retrieved and brought back to the farm for processing, Isserley suspects it could create newspaper headlines that read “MONSTER FOUND BY FISHERMEN” (104). The headline again reminds us how the novel maintains these hitchhikers' less-than-human status, as Esswis and Isserley, akin to professional killers, move into spaces where they might have fled to exterminate them like pests.

2.2.3 Hunting for Muscles

It is logical to assume that the men Isserley captures are unable to meet the hegemonic standards based on which they would have achieved a better standing in their environment. In R. W. Connell's view, hegemonic masculinity is an idealized form of masculinity in a given cultural setting and is relational, indicating that the dominance of some is dependent on the subordination of many. Connell defines hegemonic masculinity in relation to three other types of masculinity: subordinate, complicit, and marginalized. Subordinate masculinities, Connell explains with reference to homosexuality, are those that contravene the hegemonic ideal and are perceived in patriarchal ideology as repositories of whatever is “expelled from the circle of legitimacy” (79). Most men cannot attain the normative standards of masculinity, and very few practice the hegemonic ideal completely. Nevertheless, a large majority of men benefit from the patriarchal dividend and are connected with the hegemonic project without embodying hegemonic masculinity. Connell theorizes the situation of these men by recognizing their relationship as that of complicity with the hegemonic project (79-

80). Lastly, Connell employs the term marginalization to refer “to the relations between the masculinities in dominant and subordinated classes or ethnic groups” (80). The concept of “marginalized masculinity” delineated by Connell would help us explore how men at the other end of the social spectrum are barred from culturally privileged ways of being and conducting themselves as men.

Weak, Sick, and Diseased

The relational nature of masculinity becomes apparent when Isserley exalts a particular physique at the expense of another. Isserley is on the lookout for “desirable” hitchhikers while trying to avoid those hitchhikers that are “misshapen rejects” (10). The narrator points out, “puny, scrawny specimens” (1, 197), or “starvelings” (6) with “spindly arms and a pigeon chest” (11) are of no use to Isserley since she is looking for perfect burly specimens with big muscles and massive bulks. The ambivalent representation of the hitchhikers codes them as tough and strong whilst also as sick, weak, and diseased. The classed nature of these representations is obvious in the choice of words to describe the hitchhikers. Starveling denotes those who are marked by poverty and have become infirm due to a lack of food. The other adjectives, such as scrawny or spindly, are also suggestive of physical weakness that often results from not having enough to eat. In addition, the term pigeon chest is an alternative name for pectus carinatum, a deformity in which the chest protrudes over the sternum, giving the person a bird-like appearance (National Library of Medicine).¹¹ The bodies of the hitchhikers thus are also represented

¹¹ Rebecca Gowland has noted how health is a matter of social justice, where those with shorter life expectancies and higher level of chronic disease come from the poorest backgrounds. She writes, ‘the less equal a society, the greater the health disparities between the rich and the poor’ (147).

as diseased, which parallels the paradoxical coding of working-class bodies as strong and tough while also as weak and sick (Skeggs, *Respectability* 99-100; Edley 62). Finally, the word misshapen signifies that the bodies of these hitchhikers are most probably disabled. The bodies of these hitchhikers become less normative through the interplay of gender with class, appearance, physique, and disability. Thomas Gerschick has noted that “the degree to which one is bodily normative matters considerably because it helps place one in the stratification order” (372). These hitchhikers with sick and weak bodies marked by poverty are distant from the cultural ideal of the muscular body, positioning them at the lowest levels of the social hierarchy.

Considering that these hitchhikers with non-normative bodies are from the lowest strata of society, the question arises: Why does Isserley not capture them instead of the muscular hitchhikers? After all, Isserley believes “these creatures were all exactly the same fundamentally. A few weeks of intensive farming and standardized feeds made that clear enough” (135). Critics have also pondered this question, stating that it is unclear why Isserley needs to capture muscular men (Caracciolo, “Murky Mercy” 595). If we assume that all vodsels are not the same, then the answer to this question is twofold. Firstly, the hitchhikers, when viewed as animals to be farmed, must be free of disease and sickness, meaning that they must be healthy, which these hitchhikers are not. A weak, sick, or disabled animal in a factory farm is associated with pollution and contamination and must be removed or culled. The farm, in the public imagination, must be upheld as a realm that is sanitary, safe, and free of disease. This is paradoxical since the muscular and healthy hitchhikers that Isserley captures, as we demonstrate in the essay, are disabled through the intrusive techniques used to modify them. They are “shaved, castrated, fattened, intestinally modified, chemically purified” to make them fit for elite consumption (114). In this manner, the hitchhikers who once approximated the

cultural ideal of muscularity and strength are disabled in the novel, becoming far more grotesque than the poor, sick, and weak hitchhikers that Isserley does not capture. In terms of animal rights discourse, this is a damning analogy for factory farms where disability is engineered into animals in the name of productivity. As Somers and Soldatic have noted, “a healthy animal in a factory farm is an oxymoron” (38). Secondly, Isserley, as we noted previously, is a hunter who combines aspects of sports and commercial hunting. In the case of sport hunting, Marti Kheel has observed, “whereas natural predators prey on the old, the weak, and the sick, human hunters typically select the biggest and healthiest animals to kill” (36). Akin to sports hunter, Isserley cruises the highways looking for big muscular hitchhikers.

All Brawn and no Brain

In the working-class context, physical strength is often associated with the performance of manual labor. In the past, strong physiques were considered vital to work such as farming, mining, or construction. Men of this class relied on the strength of their bodies to survive and assert their dominance in society (Connell 55). We find hitchers in the novel engaged in manual labor, including construction, wheel gathering, fixing cars, wood cutting, and gardening, activities that invoke the old binaries that differentiated the less cerebral and more embodied working-class masculinities from the rational and disembodied middle-class masculinities. The novel presents a stratified society where occupations based on physicality are considered lower in status for aliens as well as hitchhikers. Aliens such as Hilis or Unser are assumed to be “cut above these brawny specimens” (195), as they are linked with a form of masculinity prototypical of the middle class. This disembodied and cerebral masculinity of Hilis and Unser is demarcated not just in their professions but also in the manner in which they are depicted. Hilis, the cook, is adjudged as an “obsessed scientist” (125), while Unser, the

chief processor or the butcher, regards himself as a “surgeon” (163). The distinctive ways Unser and Hilis transform the hitchhikers into products also represent class relations. Unser works in a surrounding that resembles a laboratory, and medical jargon details his precise movements as he dissects the hitchhikers. In addition, Hilis’s remarks in the novel reveal how food choice reflects class affiliations. When Hilis presents his slow-cooked steaks carved from the bodies of the hitchhikers to Isserley, he reminds her that her close contact with the elites of their planet has equipped her to “appreciate good food”, and he adds: “You didn’t grow up eating garbage like these dumb goons from the Estates” (127).

The masculinity of the aliens, despite their physical prowess, is problematized by considering them as workers who labor “mindlessly” eating “whatever offal was too gross for their masters” (256). These aliens involved in manual labor at Ablach Farms cannot attain the hegemonic state that Hilis and Unser occupy. Similar to alien workers, the hitchhikers are distant from hegemonic masculinities. Often unnamed and without unique subjectivities or personalities, the captured hitchhikers are outcasts replaceable with one another. The hitchhikers sent for processing, who do not belong to the working class, are exceptions, and their predicament transgresses Isserley’s protocol. The masculinities of these exceptions can be contrasted with the hitchhikers that Isserley captures and delivers to Ablach Farms. As mentioned earlier, Isserley’s targets often go unnoticed in society, but the author presents the capture of four hitchhikers that have led to police investigations. The police report that there is a connection between the disappearances of William Cameron and the medical student Dieter Genscher. Despite these hitchhikers’ muscular and huge physiques, the narrator emphasizes the disembodied attributes that separate them from the traditional conceptions regarding the working class. Genscher is portrayed as a “harmless-looking” athletic young man (253)

who decides to travel across the world upon losing interest in the study of medicine. The spatial immobility of the working class is regularly highlighted through the hitchhikers who must wait on the charity of some passer-by to reach their destinations. They cannot afford public, let alone private, means of travel, allowing Isserley to entrap them in her car. For Genscher, however, hitchhiking is a choice and not a necessity, and his acquaintances at medical school who aspire to become specialists in their fields and “drive a Porsche” (46) reflect this disparity between him and the working-class men. Isserley’s thoughts describe Genscher as a specimen “blessed with the perfection of form” who is “well cared for, healthy” and “free to roam the world”, in contrast to other males who are “scarred by neglect, riddled with diseases, and spurned by their kind” (59-60). Isserley also differentiates between Genscher and the other hitchhikers based on contentment. Despite possessing attributes that are culturally valued, Genscher is miserable, while the socially and physically excluded males are occasionally content. However, for Isserley, their contentment seems to arise from “something more enigmatic than mere stupidity” (60). Jansz has argued that stoicism is one of the four focal attributes of hegemonic masculinity, along with autonomy, achievement, and aggression (166-169). In this sense, Genscher’s “crestfallen stoicism” (59) is attributed a positive value in contrast to other males’ mysterious yet somewhat stupid occasional contentment.

William Cameron, meanwhile, is an exception since he is captured in response to the trauma Isserley suffers at the hands of the previous hitchhiker who attempted to rape her. The desire for revenge after being sexually assaulted by the hitchhiker causes Isserley to break her procedure and capture Cameron without checking whether he is unemployed, vulnerable, and isolated. Critics have noted that his capture stems from a “sexualized desire for revenge” (Dillon 147), is an act of “blood-lust” (Dunn 158), and

occurs as a result of a “fit of anger” after the previous hitchhiker attempts rape (Kark & Vanderbeke 13). However, Cameron is also an exception because he is a family man inclined to “[l]ong philosophical one-to-ones’ (200), whose masculinity incorporates identity elements often associated with femininity. Cameron strives ‘to connect with his intuitive feminine side’ (201) to put Isserley at ease and break the silence in the best possible way. Even though Cameron is unable to converse with Isserley, his thoughts convey the construction of a hybrid masculinity that takes on feminine characteristics such as being friendly, emotionally open, supportive, and caring. He longs to ask Isserley about her physical and mental state displaying his care and support, and her physical appearance, which he surmises is a result of an accident or a disease, does not perturb or excite him since, for him, “it was the inner person that mattered” (203). Moreover, Cameron's spatial mobility is referenced in the novel in his inner monolog, where he remembers his travel to Catalonia in Spain with his previous girlfriend. Jenny Preece argues that spatial mobility is integral to the notion of the middle-class person and is one of the ways through which the middle- class draws distance from the working-class (1784). The spatial mobility of Cameron and Genscher, along with their disembodied and cerebral attributes, reinforces their separation from the working class. Neither of these hitchhikers intends to solicit sexual favors from Isserley, and they are sympathetic toward her.

On the other hand, the other two hitchhiking victims investigated by the police, Anthony Mallinder and an unnamed individual, although unrelated, typify a predatory mindset often attributed to the men of the working class.¹² Mallinder is described as a

¹² This predatory discourse stereotypical of the working class is challenged in McDowell’s work, where she details other versions of working-class masculinity premised on family values, work ethic or domestic respectability (*Redundant Masculinities*). However, rather

“monstrous baldhead in yellow overalls” who is “built like a piece of heavy farm machinery” and “looked as if he could demolish a hospital with bare hands” (253, 175-176). Two aspects come to the fore in this description: his brute strength and inhuman appearance, emphasizing his embodied masculinity. After Isserley picks up Mallinder, she soon realizes the threat he presents to her, and she starts to feel self-conscious as an “inexplicable chill travel[s] down her spine” (177). Mallinder’s conversations revolve around Isserley’s physique and reveal his intentions, which is to rape her at knifepoint. The other unnamed hitchhiker, depicted as homeless and vulnerable, moments after getting into Isserley’s car, passes a lewd remark before indecently exposing himself. However, he, unlike Mallinder, is married, which ranks him higher within the internal hegemony of masculinities. Both of these instances lead to police investigations, but Isserley regrets the capture of the homeless individual, which causes her to experience a sense of shame and failure. A similar feeling haunts her again later in the novel when she realizes she has captured a family man in William Cameron. This makes her suddenly say to herself, “You shouldn’t have taken that red-haired vodsel” (254). Hegemony is a relation “internal to the gender order” (Connell 80), and this is evidenced by the depictions of these hitchhikers and alien workers, where class relations intersect with gender to differentiate between men.

2.2.4 Muscling for Bread

David Morgan has shown that class practices are often gendered, with men assuming or being allocated the role of class actors and agents. Class, historically, has had a particularly masculine character and shares strong connections with men and

than contesting the predatory discourse, the novel complies to it, representing the men of this class as a threat to Isserley.

masculinities based on some of its key indicators, such as property, occupation, and the separation of private and public spheres (Morgan). In the middle of the nineteenth century in Britain, trade unions and professional associations excluded women from various occupations, leading to a restructuring of society (Walby). While women owned property and had occupations, “male property and male occupations became more dominant” (Morgan 169). The masculine character of class was further emphasized through the distinction between the private and the public sphere. The public sphere was dominated by men, as it was associated with employment, property, wealth, and politics (Morgan). As a result of these changes in the nineteenth century, men became the heads of their households and the sole providers of their families, leading to the emergence of the idea of the breadwinner and breadwinner wage. Morgan writes: “The idea of the man as “provider” remains remarkably persistent in a wide range of modern cultures, right up to the present day. It can be argued, in fact, that the idea of the provider is a major element in the construction of masculine identity; it is a moral as well as an economic category” (169). Several scholars have pointed out that the breadwinner model is central to the dominant constructions of masculinity in industrial societies (Nixon; Roberts & Walker; Connell; Adkins; Ehrenreich). However, many of these scholars have also noted the declining practical relevance of the breadwinner model. The changes in family structures in recent years, along with the increasing participation of women in the labor market, have contributed to the decline of the breadwinner model (Lewis). The male breadwinner model in Britain has been supplanted by a dual breadwinner model, or more precisely, a one-and-half-earner model (given women’s lower wages), where women work part-time and are the primary caregivers in the

family (Lewis).¹³ Women's labor force participation has been steadily increasing, but it remains unclear to what degree and for which classes (Crompton; Lewis). While women's participation in the labor force has risen, men's employment rates have been falling since the 1980s (Crompton 263). For working-class men, unemployment and flexible labor has distanced them from the breadwinner model in terms of its practical relevance but not in terms of its ideological significance. In response to hegemonic masculinity, which is closely associated with paid employment in industrial societies, unemployed men from marginalized backgrounds construct an alternate version of masculinity that Connell has labeled as "protest masculinity". Commonly associated with working-class men and arising from experiences of powerlessness, Connell defines protest masculinity as a "marginalised masculinity, which picks up themes of hegemonic masculinity in the society at large but reworks them in a context of poverty" (114). In this version of masculinity, men adopt and exaggerate conventional male norms while possessing unconventional attitudes. This is why spectacular and macho behavior involving heavy drug/alcohol use, violence, minor crime, school resistance, etc., coexists alongside respecting women, having egalitarian views about the sexes, and being affectionate towards children (Connell 110-112).

In *Under the Skin*, Isserley targets men who cannot fulfill the breadwinner role. At various points in the novel, she tries to determine if the men have families they provide for, asking questions such as "[a]re you married?" (16, 202) or "[n]o children, then?" (16). The distance of the hitchhiker from the breadwinner role signifies their distance from the hegemonic norms of manhood and their society. In Isserley's view, "the vodel community itself seemed to be selecting those of its members it was content

¹³ For a more sustained discussion of women's labor force participation, see Damaske;

Crompton; and Lewis.

to have culled” (175). Her questions thus are a means to verify whether the hitchhiker she picks up is rejected and exiled from society. At first glance, it appears that Isserley is afraid of the police and picks hitchhikers whose disappearance would go unreported, thus arousing no suspicion toward her. However, the novel does not allow any straightforward explanations for her motives. We do not know whether Isserley cannot afford to be stopped by the police due to her extraterrestrial appearance despite the modifications (117), the nature of her occupation (137), or, as the narrator states, “because her car was decorated with out-of-date tax stickers, and she had no licences for anything” (285). Moreover, Isserley does not pick the easiest targets since she is on the hunt, and similar to a sports hunter, she captures the strongest and healthiest hitchhikers, not necessarily the most marginalized. The criterion of hunting is only satisfied when one pursues wild animals, and a wild animal, as Cartmill elaborates in his work on the history of hunting, is “one that is not docile- that is, not friendly towards people or submissive to their authority” (29). According to Isserley, the vodsels she captures are “very dangerous,” thereby representing two aspects: the fulfilment of the hunting criterion and the subtle coding of the poor as a threat (237). Isserley’s capture of hitchhikers based on their physiques brings into question her assertion that the vodsels are “all exactly the same fundamentally” (135). As Caracciolo has noted, it remains unclear “why exactly Isserley needs a hitch-hiker, and why she needs one with “big muscles”” (“Murky Mercy” 595).

Further, the alien race, which the critics have noted as “highly intelligent” and having a “knowledge and technology far superior to humans” (Calarco, “Belonging to this world” 198; Gymnich & Costa 84) are seemingly unaware of the kinds of vodsels on Earth or the dangers that these vodsels present, in which case Isserley’s profiling of men is not dictated by her employer. Two instances elucidate the aliens’ ignorance

regarding the vodrels: Isserley's modifications modeled on unrealistic magazine images and the conversation Isserley has with the members of her race upon retrieving the vodrels Amlis had let loose. As elaborated earlier, the first instance emphasizes the distance of the alien race from the humans. However, the second instance demonstrates that the aliens are not afraid of the vodrels and instead view them as "vegetables on legs" or as harmless "dumb animals" (171, 237). When Isserley retrieves the hitchhikers Amlis had set free, the conversation is not about the repercussions of humans finding these hitchhikers. Instead, the conversation revolves around the inability of the hitchhikers to adapt to the cold, the ethics of killing animals, and Isserley's anger. This conversation is even more peculiar because Isserley's argument against Amlis is premised on the fact that the hitchhikers cannot survive the cold and not on the dangers involved in humans finding out about their operations. Nevertheless, Isserley strongly believes that Vess Incorporated's whole operation would "come falling down on all their heads" if not for her calculated approach to capturing vodrels (152). However, even Isserley's belief is without substance as she eventually realizes that her work is of no particular importance to Vess Incorporated and that she is equally replaceable as the laborers in Ablach Farm. These contradictions reveal that the aliens are either oblivious to the risks of Isserley's job or are truly so superior that they do not consider Isserley's work risky and think their operations will continue, irrespective of discovery.

Interestingly, the more spectacular elements of protest masculinity, such as drinking, petty crime, and the seeking of short sexual encounters with women, come to the fore in the portrayal of the hitchhikers. Although we cannot disregard these elements of protest masculinity, the characterization of the hitchhikers is not elaborate enough to suggest that their behavior corresponds with protest masculinity. The untraditional attitudes of protest masculinity are almost impossible to trace in the representation of

the hitchhikers in the novel. However, Isserley's questions, often about children, marriage, and family, make it evident that she is looking for those who have failed the breadwinner role. It also makes it clear that unemployment has severely impaired the capacity of these men to provide, thus distancing them from hegemonic masculinity. As Darren Nixon has noted: "Deindustrialization (particularly during the 1980s and 1990s) and the continued globalization of production have resulted in large-scale male job losses in the manufacturing and extractive industries, and a falling demand for skilled, and particularly semiskilled and unskilled, male manual labour" (53). Faber's narrative reproduces these studies in sociology in a fictional form and provides us with several instances where hitchhikers are either unemployed or looking for jobs that require manual labor. Isserley is aware of the redundancy in the regions she occupies during her hunts, recapitulating this to a few hitchhikers when she states, "there is no work anywhere up there" or "work can be hard to find" (17, 105).

The unemployed hitchhikers in the novel represent a historical moment in Britain when increasing unemployment, underemployment, flexible jobs, and low wages led to the declining practical relevancy of the breadwinner model. As women entered the labor force, they could escape the dependency inscribed in the breadwinner model and gain relative economic independence. The men who could not hold steady jobs became significantly less attractive to working women. Among the hitchhikers that Isserley captures, there are a few whose wives have left them, and almost always, the men have not fulfilled their breadwinner role and are out of paid work. One of these hitchhikers in this group who exemplifies this changing status of men states, "Janine – my ex-wife – doesn't want anything to do with me. I don't exist anymore as far as she's concerned" (19). This hitchhiker loses his house and the custody of his children to his wife, distancing him from hegemonic standards of masculinity. Another hitchhiker fears

his wife's "temper", reiterating that she would "skelp" him if he reaches home late (78). For this hitchhiker, his wife is described as the one who controls his life and "pushes him around" (81). When men are unable to support and provide for their families, or live up to the culturally defined male breadwinner role, then women can invert patriarchy (DeKeseredy & Schwartz 357). Women's inversions of patriarchy often result in the eviction of men from the household or the woman making decisions for the household and even having the car or the lease under her name (DeKeseredy & Schwartz 357). For many of these hitchhikers, the traditional ways of being and becoming a man through employment and the breadwinner role are lost, and for a few of them, inversions of patriarchy have occurred.

2.2.5 Falling Sympathies

Under the Skin is set in Easter Ross and describes the remoteness and isolation of the towns in and around this location in the Scottish Highlands. Alness, for instance, is an area where "illegal pharmaceutical substances were freely available, leading to broken windows and females giving birth too young" (25). For Isserley, Alness is a particularly good spot to pick up hitchhikers because other motorists are suspicious and afraid of the people from this town. Lindfield-Ott argues that Alness, Edderton, Milnafua, and other towns in the novel are desolate and deserted places that exemplify the hitchhikers' despair, hopelessness, and isolation (70). However, the description of the towns and the characterization of the hitchhikers reinforce the stereotype of the Scottish Highlands as a problem area. As McCullough notes, "the 'Highland Problem' rested on the assumption that there was something inherently wrong with the people and the area, and that it was beyond help" (433). Isserley understands that the humans who are unemployed, isolated, and vulnerable are inherently undesirable to other humans, and it seems to her that humanity selects "those of its members, it was content to have culled"

(175). Interestingly, the name of the farm on which the hitchhikers are slaughtered is Ablach, a Scots word for “an insignificant person” (Calarco, “Belonging to this world” 210). The Scottish Highlands are also represented as a dangerous place, where when night falls, the “deranged” start hitching (114, 139). All these representations highlight that the unemployed and the vulnerable men in the form of hitchhikers are not only rendered without value but are also marked as symbols of trouble.

The period during which the novel was written, that is, between 1990 and 2000, coincided with a general falling sympathy for those who are marginalized and at the bottom of society. The decline in sympathy resulted in a change in public attitudes against the unemployed, with the majority believing that high benefits discouraged people from working (Taylor-Gooby 34). This negative attitude toward the unemployed is evident through their capture and Isserley’s conversations with them. For instance, Isserley is convinced that the first hitchhiker fears disclosing to her “that his life is spent on the dole”, since it would convey excessive “sloth” (18). The shame and stigma associated with being on benefits are subtly depicted in the following conversation Isserley has with another hitcher who has been living in a van with his dog:

“If you own a van,’ she challenged him politely, ‘why are you hitchhiking? Why not drive yourself?’
‘Can’t afford the petrol,’ he muttered.
‘Doesn’t the government give you ... um ... an allowance?’
‘No.’
‘No?’
‘No.’
‘I thought everybody who’s unemployed gets an allowance from the government.’
‘I’m not unemployed,’ he retorted” (201).

In the British context, there exists a dichotomy of “workers vs shirkers” where the latter are often stigmatized in society (Pemberton et al.), and these hitchhikers warily contest

any potential accusations that might condemn them as scroungers. The unfavorable perception toward the unemployed is highlighted when Isserley, during a conversation with another hitchhiker, states, “I don’t believe in the dole”, expecting that “this reply would please him” (39). The novel’s lack of sympathy for these hitchhikers reflects British society’s underlying contempt for working-class people who are viewed as undeserving and feckless rather than economically unfortunate. Significantly, Haylett has observed that the reconstruction of the poor white working-class identities as “socially excluded” in Britain is premised on a racial repositioning that casts them as symbols of “backwardness” resisting “multicultural modernization” (351-357). More than their financial failings, their cultural attitudes are blamed for their current status, with male working-class identities marked for their homophobia, sexism, racism, and violence (Haylett 359).

When Britain joined the European Union in 1973, the people of the Scottish Highlands viewed this decision with much suspicion. The fishing localities of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland were particularly fearful of the UK’s entry into the EU, and these were some of the only areas to record an “anti-EU” majority (McCullough 430). Even in these areas, the anti-EU attitude changed dramatically during the 1980s and 1990s as EU mandated structural reforms supported the people (McCullough). While the Scottish Highlands, in reality, embraced a migrant population mainly coming from Europe, Faber’s novel paints a picture of resistance against diversity and inclusivity through the poor hitchhikers. Once or twice a year, Isserley gets embroiled in a conversation with a hitchhiker who declares that incomers “were ruining Scotland’s traditional existence” (53). Another hitchhiker comments on the financial failings of a Scandinavian and asserts to Isserley, “‘Foreigners’ minds don’t work the same as ours” (54). The discursive construction of the white working-class

poor as backward and a barrier to a multicultural nation is further exemplified through one of the hitchhikers that Isserley picks up. Although the novel does not make the individual's race explicit, one may assume his race and class through his inner monologue and dialogue with Isserley. This hitchhiker berates foreigners for his unemployment and pitiful existence, declaring to Isserley, "A bunch of foreigners from over your way fucked up my whole life" (139). Previously a dog breeder, the hitchhiker now lives alone in a van looking for work as a gardener, for which he holds accountable "Frogs, Sprouts, Clogs and Krauts" (139), derogatory labels for people of other countries. For men such as the hitchhiker, their masculine identity is sexist and homophobic and constructed in opposition to the middle class. The hitchhiker differentiates his masculinity from the middle class by adjudging them as "typical two income poncy show-offs" and "yuppies" (134). The hitchhiker envies the financial security of the middle class but regards them as effeminate and pretentious due to the nature of their work. His backwardness is illustrated in his rage against "spotty little queers in oversized suits" and "clueless foreign females with too much cleavage" (135). The hitchhiker symbolizes what Haylett has described as "class racism" (351), which involves the discursive construction of the working class as the social other.

2.2.6 Losing Muscles

One of the most striking passages in the novel is the description of Amlis Vess, the son of the owner of Vess Incorporated, a company that holds a monopoly on the slaughter and sale of vodsels. Amlis' introduction quite clearly pits the dominant versions of masculinity against the marginalized and the subordinate ones. For Isserley, Amlis is "the most beautiful man she had ever seen" (110), and his appearance is contrasted with the "stunted growth of Estate males", their "bald patches, discoloration, unsightly scarring on the face" (111). "Heroic ugliness" (112) or "hideous" animality (75) is compared with Amlis' perfect form. Isserley tends to associate his untarnished and

pristine body with the “wealth and privilege” (110) he has inherited from his father. Amlis' class contributes toward shaping his body, and Isserley realizes this when she, despite her physical beauty, cannot escape the rigors of the industrial work of her world. Even when she eventually gets away from the toils of her world after undergoing body modifications, her appearance on Earth resembles the alien laborers she adjudges undesirable. In the eyes of the hitchhikers, her abnormal body seems to be a consequence of “hard labour” in a factory (12), or “heavy manual job” such as “chicken-plucking” and “fish-gutting” (28), or simply an “accident” (153). The bodies of the alien laborers, likewise, suffer physical deformities due to their work, distancing them from the cultural ideal represented by Amlis' lean musculature.

Regarding body normativity, Thomas Gerschick notes that “[t]here are many ways in which a body can be less normative. Characteristics such as race, ethnicity, class, age, physique, weight, height, ability, disability, appearance, and skin color predominate” (371). We see that the bodies of alien manual laborers deviate from hegemonic standards based on class, which determines the kind of work they perform. The novel dramatizes how the alien laborers work in the oxygen factory, moisture filtration plant, or the industrial setting of Ablach farm. As the narrator's comment elicits, all these factory operations occur underground in despicable conditions, “Vess incorporated had simply dug them out of one hole and buried them in another” (257). The oxygen factory and the slaughterhouse are not entirely dissimilar because their operations cause disfigurement and impairments in the alien workers. In their essay on market relations and the body, Kelly Somers and Karen Soldatic note that “meat work is one of the most dangerous jobs globally” where the rates of injury or illness drastically exceed that of all other occupations (42). Slaughterhouse work makes the bodies of these aliens decay “hair by hair and tooth by tooth” (256), while their mere existence in

the New Estates, an underground place where “desperate people with no prospects” are “dumped”, can “brutishly” shorten lifespans (64-65). The narrator describes factory work in the New Estates as “toiling in filth like a maggot”, which, coupled with their hazardous living conditions, transforms them into a “beast, with hunched back, scarred flesh, crumbling teeth, missing fingers” (64). At various points in the novel, the narrator and Isserley regard these aliens whose bodies are marked by the drudgery of their work as “Estate trash” (64, 90, 93, 156). The Estates of aliens allude to the clusters of cheap concrete housing of the same name in Britain, which according to Lynsey Hanley, are peripheral holding cages that disallow class mobility for the impoverished and the disenfranchised (7-11). In the alien world, the Estates or the New Estates are overcrowded locations cut off from the opulence of the rich where “losers and low-lives” spiritlessly survive on “bad air” and “bad food” (64-65). We find here again the contemporary anxieties toward the working class in British society allegorically represented in the unsympathetic portrayal of the aliens inhabiting the Estates. Moreover, every aspect of their lives always invites ridicule in their society: their movement is perceived as “shambling” (64) and their accent as “whinnying” (159), in sharp contrast to Amlis' “casual realignment of balance” (163) and his “upper-class accent” (164).

Although critics have noted the intersection of gender with disability in Isserley's post-surgical body, the connections of class, work, and disability in the bodies of men have not been addressed. Class-ordained work makes the bodies of these men non-normative and reduces their value of life to matters of production and profit for their employers. For instance, Isserley condescendingly views Yns, a man who is physically “falling apart” at the meat processing plant, as an “impotent drudge” and “a slave, a disposable means to an end” (256-257). The narrator further emphasizes the

replaceable and expendable nature of these men in Ablach farm, comparing their bodies with “over-used pieces of equipment, like tools bought cheap for a job that would outlast them” (256).

Further, in farmed animals, impairment is engineered genetically or through farming practices to create beings that deviate radically from their wild or natural counterparts. Somers and Soldatic have argued that the animals in factory farms are exploited to make “hyperproductive” beings with the highest economic potential (35-36). Several studies have highlighted the paradoxical nature of factory farming, where the animal selected for processing is declared healthy while being subjected to physical modifications that inhibit all of its natural activities. Like factory-farmed animals who undergo continuous modifications to their bodies, the unemployed hitchhikers Isserley captures are “shaved, castrated, fattened, intestinally modified, chemically purified” (114). Inside Ablach Farms, impairment is normalized to push the bodies of the hitchhikers to generate massive bulks of meat that their legs can hardly support. The farm impairs hitchhikers to have an “empty scrotal sac . . . under its dark acorn of a penis” (91), thus emasculating them. The hitchhikers whose muscular bodies once approximated the cultural ideal of masculinity are surgically modified to create obese, docile, and impotent entities fit for the palate of wealthy aliens. The impairments induced in these working-class men further strips them of the exalted masculine attributes of virility and muscularity to distance them from hegemonic masculinity.

2.2.7 Conclusion

In an interview with Justine Jordan, Faber reveals the fear that plagued him through the 1990s of ending up as “homeless” or as “some kind of fringe dweller” (“I would have been different”). *Under the Skin*, is perhaps a product of this fear and contains several characters who are socially excluded. Our reading of the novel provides an example of

how the different systems of inscription, such as class and gender, fix and devalue the working- class. This article, broadly conceived in two sections, explores the workings of class through the category of gender in the marginalization of the characters in the novel. The first section concentrates on Isserley, the female protagonist, to demonstrate how her social positioning is coded through location, appearance, and employment. Isserley's appearance, represented by excess, her failed attempts to improve, her lack of alternatives, and her prior location in the Estates, marks her as working-class irrespective of the linguistic inversion that operates in the text. The second section draws on Connell's concept of marginalized masculinities to highlight how gender intersects with class to hierarchically stratify men in the novel. The men lack compensatory resources to vie for a hegemonic masculine identity, always falling short of the standards in one manner or another. We argue that most of the characters in Faber's novel are working-class and are positioned by representations that do not reflect the knowledge or understanding of their circumstances. Instead, the pathologizing representations of the working- class are reproduced through the unemployed hitchhikers, the female protagonist from the Estates, and the alien factory and farm workers.

Furthermore, embodiment, states Haraway, is "always in formation, embodiment is ongoing, dynamic, situated, and historical" (*When Species Meet* 249). The two novels in consideration permit one to discuss how embodiment is operative in both animalization and feminization. Structures of mothering and its metaphors, the primary means of identifying women, are found to be wanting (Haraway, *Cyborg Manifesto* 65). One of the reasons for such a lack can be traced to the Oedipalized nature of desire, which traces every form of desire to the essential nuclear family of the West, the father-mother-child mix. Although scholars have appreciated Ozeki's novel for its ecological

consciousness, they have also criticized it for depicting traditional patterns of female embodiment, typically for its portrayal of nuclear families with defined sex roles. What also comes across in the novels is the technological (biotechnological in both cases) modification of male and female bodies and their marginalization. The distance of these bodies from hegemonic norms of womanhood and manhood results in marginalization along the lines of gender, race, and class. In Ozeki's case, the diagram of oppression reveals itself along downward lines of effeminate men, feminization, and animalization. Accordingly, the affects that constitute an idealized version of men and women mark the bodies to limit and discard other affects that entanglements cause. Ozeki, in depicting these affects, such as changed vocalization of men exposed to DES, pituitary problems caused by antibiotics resulting in breast growth of men, uterus deformations of women, anorexia, and iron deficiencies is not merely a matter of cause and effect but of affect and action. As Haraway's quote illustrates, the body and its organs are not just a matter of biological function but of its alteration in modern times, highlighted by pollutions/combinations/entanglements of artificial and organic.

Further, the body is also traversed by different intensities and, therefore, is defined not through identity but by what it can do. Here, *Under the Skin* presents an intriguing picture of bodies, which in different contexts are defined by relations neither completely biological nor metaphysical. Rather, in the translation of both discourses, we see how the limiting term of the animal induces a becoming in the margins of society. Scholars have often praised the novel for its depiction of animal farming and how, in these settings, the animal is exploited and turned into a commodity. However, only a few humans make the cut when embodying the animal. Embodiment thus becomes context and situation-specific, where only the castigated and alienated may embody the animal. For the protagonist, when she embodies the animal, her cultural capital is

nullified, meaning that it can never be converted into symbolic capital. Similarly, the men are placed in a hierarchy, and they, too, embody the animal as per their distance from hegemonic masculinity. The hierarchical structures of Ozeki's novel are blatantly evident in Faber's novel, where the proximity to the animal entails a barring from the universal category of man or the equal citizen of modern times.

3. CHAPTER THREE

Searching for Inedibility

3.1 Introduction

In the newly emerging field of human-animal studies, which analyzes the interactions between humans and animals in various settings and contexts, the consumption of animal-sourced protein and food is fiercely contested. Scholars in this field have generally criticized animal-sourced foods, especially when they are obtained through industrial farms that house millions of animals in confined spaces to maximize output and minimize costs (Joy; Fudge, *Animal*; Potts). Many of them have advocated the abolition of industrial animal agriculture or factory farms due to the intense suffering they bring to the animals and humans caught in these operations, as well as the large-scale environmental degradation they cause (Singer; Regan, *Animal Rights Human Wrongs*). This article, however, is not about the plight of the billions of birds, sheep, cows, and other animals enmeshed in factory farms, which scholars have explored in detail. Instead, the article seeks to discuss animal-sourced protein or meat in the Indian context by engaging with fiction written by Indian authors who have richly described the preparation of an animal or its inevitable end in the form of food. These literary texts can help elucidate the symbolic nature of meat in India by revealing the dimensions of power involved in consuming or abstaining from meat. As I demonstrate, questions of hierarchy and identity, of gender, sexuality, class, and caste, are embedded in the slaughter of animals.

Research has shown that meat consumption was an integral part of human evolution, with early hominid behavior characterized by opportunistic hunting and

scavenging (Stanford and Bunn 3-5). Scholars have noted that eating meat was significant in the development of the human brain and its cognitive capacities (Pereira and Vincente 586). Evidence to decisively support our omnivorous heritage has come largely from fossil records that show the cranial-dental changes for tearing flesh that marked hominid teeth but also from gastrointestinal tract features (Pereira and Vincente 587; Stanford and Bunn 5). However, Stanford and Bunn have pointed out “the lack of direct evidence in the fossil record of how meat was obtained, or how much was eaten, or how often, or how exactly increasing importance of meat-eating may have contributed to the rise of the genus Homo” (3). The modern world, and in particular the Western nations, compared to the recent past of even a hundred years ago, have become accustomed to an unprecedented amount of animal products in their diet. Vaclav Smil writes that the shift from a carbohydrate diet of grains, tubers and legumes to a varied diet consisting of animal products was possible in developed countries as a result of three fundamental factors, “worldwide adoption of mechanical prime movers in agriculture, availability of inexpensive synthetic nitrogenous fertilizers, and new varieties of crops that doubled, even tripled, traditional yields and released more farmland previously used to produce food crops for growing high-quality feed crops” (47). Meat is so readily available in Western countries that it has replaced the old plant-based staples of these countries, becoming a normalized part of their everyday meals. Melanie Joy argues that meat consumption in the West is justified through a mythology that deems it as “normal, natural, and necessary” (96). In contrast to this mythology, the article highlights that in the Indian setting, meat-eating is occasional for most of the public. Indian meat consumption compared to Western nations is very low, standing at 3kg per capita (Smil 54). Several factors, such as ideas of purity and pollution, caste, religion, and political pressures, inhibit the consumption of animals in India. The article

explores these factors through food pathways inscribed in literary texts. Literature can provide insights into the cultures of consumption and the dilemmas a society faces when prohibiting or accepting animals as food. The changes occurring in the Indian landscapes in relation to the consumption of animals require ever-increasing scrutiny. Analyzing these literary fictional documents may garner novel ways of challenging or even negotiating the transformation of animals into meat. The deleterious effects of animal farming have been well recorded, with scholars asserting that it is the single biggest cause of biodiversity and habitat loss (Srinivasan 3). Globalization and the universalization of tastes in countries such as India might mean that the multinational corporations accountable for the highest meat production will most likely find footholds in the Indian market, altering the ways of meat consumption. Literature, through its ability to speculate about the future, can provide a route to perhaps tackle these complex issues so that we may be able to repair the ecological damage that the planet has incurred.

3.2. Acts of Witnessing

Upmanyu Chatterjee's short novel *The Revenge of the Non-Vegetarian* is set in the small imaginary town of Batia in a state called Narmada Pradesh. The story follows the murder of Nadeem Dalvi, a mamlatdar (revenue officer), and his family by their servant Basant Kumar Bal. The murder brings Madhusudan Sen, ICS, sub-divisional magistrate of Batia, to investigate the death of the family. Nadeem Dalvi, a Muslim and a subordinate of Sen, also happens to be Sen's daily supplier of animal-based nutrition in the form of meat, eggs, and fish. The food cooked at Dalvi's house was "ferried twice a day" (37) to the magistrate's residence, a "charming late-nineteenth century bungalow on Temple Road in the Civil Lines area" (25). Madhusudan Sen paid Dalvi a sum of "three rupees and four annas per week" (37) to satiate his desire for meat, as he is made

aware of the fact that cooking meat in the vicinity of the 1000-year-old Dayasagar Adinath Prabhu temple was frowned upon. Sen's cook Murari conveys this by stating, "The entire area from Dayasagar Adinath down to Durga Tank Crossing is vegetarian, sir. Meat, fish, eggs, liver, not allowed. Not even onions and garlic. Out of respect, sir" (28). Madhusudan Sen's daily intake of animal-based food sources is brought to a sudden halt when Nadeem Dalvi is murdered for beef. Outraged by the murder of his "principal protein and cholesterol supplier" (39), Sen vows to catch the person who committed the crime and bring him to justice.

In the novel, Madhusudan Sen is described as a "man of strong opinions, both cautious and intelligent, and quietly bullheaded" (36). As an officer from the Indian Civil Service (ICS) in 1949, Sen displays a proclivity towards a rather English style of living and dining, and the author recounts him as "too much of a gentleman" (48). Sen's Englishness can be further evinced by his fondness for the "centurial trees, arches, picturesque well" at his "charming" bungalow (35). His expensive Grundig transistor radio adds to his overall bureaucratic disposition. However, in the matter of dining, we can find indisputable evidence for his performed Englishness. While explaining his diet to his subordinate mamlatdar Nadeem Dalvi, Madhusudan Sen reveals, "I have been accustomed since childhood to some non-vegetarian item in every meal. Meat, fish, eggs, liver, beef" (35). "Greasy aalu parathas with dahi" or "toast, cornflakes and milk," as Sen puts it, "will never do" (28). A vegetarian diet such as this, he explains to Nadeem Dalvi, would disallow him from working well since eating a vegetarian meal does not constitute "eating well" (35). Served a vegetarian meal by his cook Murari when first appointed as the magistrate of Batia, Sen summons him, and remarks, "Eggs and sausages, liver, toast, fruit, and tea was my typical breakfast in Calcutta" (28). In addition, Sen prefers a glass of "Cutty Sark" scotch whiskey and a "GoldFlake"

cigarette during the evenings after work (28). These descriptions create an image of Madhusudan Sen as an ardent non-vegetarian. Johan Fischer's work *Vegetarianism, Meat and Modernity in India* explains the origin and nature of the word non-vegetarian. He elaborates, "[N]on-veg' (meat, fish, eggs and alcohol) is an Indian-English term that originated in the early 20th century and was used in menus at restaurants and resorts catering to middle- and upper-class British and Indian patrons. In its traditional usage, the term denotes an antinomic position by naming things that do not belong within normal, polite and socially orthodox Hindu practices, whereas 'vegetarian' indicates a 'normal' position" (2). According to this description, Sen effectively resists what is normalized as Hindu. But this would be a simplification of the various positions that Sen occupies in relation to meat-eating in the novel.

Hansda Sowendra Shekhar writes, "Although it is not mentioned in the book, Sen seems to be a high-caste Hindu, someone from a background privileged enough to enable him to take the ICS examination" ("Beef or Something"). Sen's upper-class status can be surmised by the non-veg dishes he likes to consume daily, especially considering the year the novel is set in, i.e., 1949, an era without farming technology that transformed agriculture. In this sense, Sen parallels the modern Western man's diet, which is loaded with animal-sourced food. Ironically, Sen invokes tradition to justify his consumption of meat, and he states, "I am by no means an irreligious man. In fact, you could say that my taste in food is strictly Vedic" (34-35). Sen's statement to the uncritical eye seems as an affront to Hindu religion which forbids the consumption of meat, and especially beef, but this is not the case. Kumar explains, "The essence of the early form of Hinduism (1700-1100 BCE), sometimes also called Vedism or Brahmanism, was animal sacrifice. In this period, animal sacrifice was deemed to be the sole way of appeasing gods and supernatural forces. People used to consume the meat

of the sacrificed animals. Meat was a normal diet for all the sections of society” (205). Until the twelfth century CE, there was no ban on the consumption of beef, and historians write that even Brahmins were unopposed to eating beef. It was the sacrificial and economic use of the cow that gave it an elevated status during the Vedic period. The cow was not considered sacred during these times, and was a major food source for the people during the Vedic period and earlier in the Indus Valley (Staples 38-39). The idea of the cow as a sacred object was first promoted around 500 BCE when Buddhism and Jainism advocated the concept of *ahimsa*, or non-violence, toward all living things. Buddhists at that time had taken issue with the idea of sacrifice, and to regain the moral high ground, Brahmins supposedly gave up beef. Nevertheless, as Staples notes, “[A]lthough ahimsa had become established doctrine by Brahmins by the fourth century CE, even then popular practice was often at variance with this” (40). The practice of cattle slaughter and the consumption of cow meat for Hindus continued well into the 19th century before it became an act that separated one from being considered a Hindu. It is this aspect of Hinduism that Sen sardonically alludes to when explaining the recent absence of meat in his diet to Nadeem Dalvi. Moreover, Sen cannot accept a day without meat, and upon learning that his cook Murari is a vegetarian and a staunch devotee of Dayasagar Adinath Prabhu, he fires him.

Further, the novel highlights Sen’s desire for red meat and beef in particular. Madhusudan Sen directs Nadeem Dalvi “not to bother with sea fish or chicken; for one, Bengalis ate only river fish and for another, chicken flesh was so tasteless that it made him feel vegetarian” (37). The emphasis on red meat purposively redirects the reader’s attention to contemporary politics focused on the slaughter of cows. Sen seems aware of the politics surrounding beef-eating and remarks, “The government is going to enact legislation- any time now, definitely this year- banning the slaughter of cows before

they reach a certain age. . . I certainly cannot break the law to indulge in my food habits. So buffalo meat it shall be” (37- 38). Despite these remarks, Sen’s approach to eating meat, considering his upper caste and upper-class status, problematizes any solidarity that he might have had with the marginalized. Since Sen is an ICS officer, his tastes, judgments, and pronouncements in the novel do not face any resistance. Sen’s beef consumption seems uncannily similar to the *bhadralok*, a term Kalyan Das utilizes to describe educated, urban, high caste, and high class. Tracing the history of the *bhadralok* to Young Bengals, a group of English-educated students in Hindu college (Presidency College now) whom Henry Louis Vivian Derozio influenced, Rosinka Chaudhuri writes, “The native managers of the Hindu College were alarmed at the progress which some of the pupils were making under Derozio, by actually cutting their way through ham and beef and wading to liberalism through tumblers of beer” (27). This image of the 19th-century group of elites is starkly similar to Sen, who cruises through life in the vicinity of a famous temple, feasting on beef and alcohol. However, unlike the group from the 19th century who wished to address the issues of social orthodoxy and religious dogmatism, Sen’s consumption does not necessarily express any solidarity with the lower classes or castes. In this sense, Sen’s beef eating, despite seeming progressive and transgressional, is not entirely rooted in the kind of beef-eating practice that the lower castes advocate to contest the hegemony of the upper- castes.

When Sen arrives to inspect Nadeem Dalvi’s house, which had become a pile of charred wreckage, he smells the air to decode what might have occurred on the premises. This is the first time the reader encounters Sen’s extraordinary sense of smell, for he, amidst the burnt-down house, is able to decode not just the sharp smell of kerosene and cow dung but also another aroma of “meat fried and curried and cooked for an age in a hundred spices, as though for a rich marriage feast” (23). It is this

significance of meat and eating habits that the novel keeps returning to through the characters to satirize current affairs. Once the post-mortem is conducted on the bodies of Dalvi's family, Sen comes to know that the servant Basant Kumar Bal is the orchestrator of the crimes. Sen vows to turn vegetarian until Basant Kumar Bal is hanged, an act which also becomes the title of the novel *The Revenge of the Non-Vegetarian*. Sen's turn to vegetarianism brings contradicting commentaries on meat-eating, some of which Sen himself alludes to.

Interestingly, it is through Sarat Daftari, "Vice Chairman of Dayasagar Adinath Charitable Trust," that we learn of Madhusudan Sen's vegetarianism and his order to close the sole operating abattoir in the district (81). Daftari adjudges the abattoir as "disgraceful" and appreciates his "manful and honourable act" in closing it down (80). Sen, in slightly different terms, concurs with Daftari's assessment of the abattoir, stating that it was "quite a shock" to him to see how it operated (80). It is Sen's sense of smell again which results in him discovering the abattoir. The narrator describes: "And then just after the gaidapur level crossing, he had been assailed, almost physically, by a stench so powerful – of carrion, of rotten flesh and hot glue – that his stomach, for the first time in his life actually heaved" (81). Sen describes the experience of visiting the slaughterhouse as unpleasant even for his "coarse, non-vegetarian sensibility" (82). Although Sen shuts down the abattoir on legality, stating that "They had no permissions or licences from any authority" (81), his act of witnessing its "nightmarish" functioning is of equal significance (83).

According to Naisargi Dave, "To witness, then, might best be understood as a radical interpenetration of life and death: to exercise a disciplined presence to violence that opens up a death that then compels a new kind of responsible life in a previously unimaginable skin" (442). The act of witnessing an animal's death in despicable

circumstances insists Dave can result in a relationality with the animal, where the human sheds the skin of a bounded self and realizes the suffering of the animal. She describes witnessing as an act of disciplined presence, in which the witness, instead of walking away from the spectacular, grounds themselves to view the horror and suffering of the animal, thereby creating a relation of intimacy in the face of death. In Dave's anthropological visits, she gives the example of animal activist Carmelia Satija's witnessing of the Idgah slaughterhouse in New Delhi. Dave writes, "The animals are brought in from miles around the city, thrown from the trucks into heaps by their limbs, most with their legs already broken and some crushed to death from the journey" (443).

The narrator's description of Madhusudan Sen's act of witnessing is remarkably similar to that of the animal rights activist. As he enters the slaughterhouse, Sen sees two butcher apprentices pull a buffalo calf off a tempo, breaking its leg. The narrator reveals the pain of the buffalo calf, pointing out that it "lay trembling on the ground, thrashing its legs about, excreting out of fear and mooing as much in agony as that of terror" (83). The second calf pulled out of the truck faces a similar fate, breaking its foreleg. The first calf is dragged by its tail to the shed, and Sen watches its "head bounce, repeatedly, off the pebbles on the uneven ground, its eyes, distended by its distress, seemingly about to pop out of their sockets" (83-84). As Sen enters the slaughterhouse, he observes the gore and violence inside. He sees the limbs of goats and cattle being broken, their throats slit, and chickens beheaded on a floor caked with excrement, blood, and offal. The carnage that takes place within the slaughterhouse makes Sen feel "totally unmanned" (84). He is unable to distance himself from the meat he relishes and the suffering he witnesses. As a sub-divisional magistrate, he is compelled to witness not just the suffering but the unequal relations of power between species that create such appalling practices and institutions of death. Ironically, the

slaughterhouse is owned by the young man who was supposed to marry Nadeem Dalvi's daughter, and he, upon seeing Sen, figures that the ICS officer had "dropped by to pick for himself some choice cuts" (85). What Sen witnesses impacts how he had previously thought about meat, making him question his non-vegetarian choices. The species divide, which allowed Sen to consume animals freely, collapses as Sen witnesses the deaths that he, in a way, is culpable for. The act of witnessing what a buffalo calf undergoes expands Sen's boundaries of relationality with the animal, implicating him in the links of responsibility and obligation towards others. As he gazes at the spectacle before him, not only is Sen "unmanned," but he also feels his "spine tingle" and his "teeth twinge" (84-86). When Sen's sight registers boiling water being poured over a castrated buffalo calf by butcher apprentices who laugh and shout in "jocular alarm," his entire viewpoint regarding eating meat undergoes a radical transformation (85). After this instance, the voice of the narrator assumes the voice of Sen, remarking in first person for the only time in the novel, "This is for the likes of me, this unspeakable savagery and torture; this blood sport with sacred life is but to create some cutlet or curry or kebab for the dinner tables of the carnivores" (86). Sacrilege is no longer dependent on ideas of religious pollution and purity but on the shared vulnerability of all life. What previous readings in this chapter had contested as not sacred becomes sacrilege due to modern operations that cause endless suffering and inevitable destinies.

Although Sen's quitting of non-veg coincides with his witnessing of the "horrors" at the slaughterhouse (88), he does not cede any moral high ground to vegetarianism. Instead, Sen displays an ambivalence toward both practices of eating and subtly satirizes the practice of vegetarianism through his rhetorical questions directed at Sarat Daftari. Sen asks Daftari, a strident vegetarian and a devotee of the temple, "How

far, Mr Daftari, would you carry your reverence for life? . . . Would all vegetarians, for instance, be opposed to the death penalty for even the most despicable murderer?" (89). Without waiting for a reply, Sen divulges the dilemma bothering him, stating, "It is not clear to me, the link between the carnivore and the love of slaughter. One thinks, you know, of the horrors inflicted on the world and Europe in the last decade by a vegetarian. . . . and one senses there quite the opposite of a reverence for life" (89-90). Despite being set in 1949 and referring to the myth of Adolf Hitler as a vegetarian, Sen's statements are also suggestive of contemporary Indian politics in which beef marks the volatile line between religions. Such foregrounding of caste or religion related violence premised on food results in the ignoring of animal centric concerns. The processes of procuring the meat become the background for humanist notions, disallowing any other form of dialog that implicates humans in the horrific suffering of animals. The ensuing result is that the animal becomes barred in the Indian setting from any ethical concern since the politics itself is based on its death. Sen's comments are a subtle reference to issues beyond the culinary control of the marginalized. In India, most states practice a complete ban on the slaughter of cows and prohibit the consumption of beef, which scholars have often found to cater to the dominant upper-caste Hindu ethic of considering the cow as sacred (Chigateri; Sunder; Sathyamala). The impetus provided recently to the protection of cows through movements that link the animal to an essential Hindu identity becomes entangled in the overall economic viability of male calves, old unproductive cows, and an aggressive dairy revolution. India has the highest bovine headcount and is one of the leading milk producers and the world's largest beef exporter (Narayanan, "Cow Protection" 2). In a country that promotes the sanctity of the cow, the buffalo, along with a small percentage of cows, are exported for meat, complicating the discourse for cow protectionism. Favoring cows instead of all milch

and draught cattle for protection is, in turn, speciesist and is not intended for the welfare of the animals. Further, as Govindrajan has elaborated in her anthropological study in the state of Uttarakhand, the practice of cattle slaughter and smuggling has continued, and ironically, with the approval of upper caste Hindus, whom the nationalists had sought to unite for cow protectionism (63-65). As it is economically unfeasible to nurture old, unproductive cows and male calves in rural areas, farmers often entrusted the animals to others, wholly cognizant of the fact that they would most probably be slaughtered. With new regulations around the slaughter of cows, the animals are often left on the highways, causing them to starve to a slow death (Govindrajan).

Madhusudan Sen's comment critiques not just the end of the lifecycle of animals but also the irreverence for life that is ignored in the processes of dairy farming. Sen's comments imply complete control over the animals' biological life in agriculture. With technological developments in the animal industry, the number of milch animals can be multiplied exponentially through artificial insemination, superovulation, and surrogacy (Narayanan, "Cow Protectionism"). Moreover, the inter-breeding of Jersey cows with indigenous breeds for higher milk yields has resulted in the creation of hybrids who are unable to acclimatize to Indian conditions and are more prone to parasites and infections. The abuse and exploitation of livestock for dairy and breeding are now gaining academic attention, with critics demonstrating how these sentient beings are objectified as property and denied any ethical consideration. The cost of the white revolution is the breeding of cattle that are discarded as soon as their productivity decreases, often within three to four years after their first lactation (Potts, *What is Meat Culture* 10). The intensive breeding of cattle in India for milk and its by-products is unsustainable and contradictory to the prohibition of slaughter. The legislation

purveying the end of the lifecycle of the animals completely disregards the way the animals are treated during their lifecycle.

3.3. Luxury and the Dead Animal

The novel's entire narrative is structured around deprivation and desire that manifests itself in non-veg consumption. The murder of the Dalvi family by Basant Kumar Bal, at first glance, seems to be for the want of a few morsels of meat. Upon close reading, one realizes that it is not just a lack of meat in his diet that completely unhinges him, as he bludgeons and axes down the whole family before setting them and their house alight. Basant Kumar Bal, as the narrator discloses to us, is a man inundated with menial work. Never retiring "before one in the morning and without a moment's rest," Bal lives off the scraps of the family (9, 18). In the hierarchical household of Nadeem Dalvi, his family ate first before passing the leftovers to the sister-in-law and her daughter, who have taken refuge with them. After the sister-in-law and her daughter finished the leftovers, it was up to Bal to scrounge from whatever they left. Bal describes his daily ordeal in visible angst to a police officer, "They had non-vegetarian almost every day, saab, goat or chicken or fish or egg. They ate like rakshasas themselves and always left only two small pieces of meat in the pot, one each for the sister-in-law and her daughter. . . . I got the scrapings of the pot, some gobs of curry, some grains of rice and a couple of chapatis. Then I'd have to flinch two green chilis and one raw onion to complete my meal" (20). Comparing himself to a donkey and slaving beast, Bal accuses the Dalvi household of feeding him inadequately. He maintains that the Dalvis "always ate well" and preferred the others under their roof to "feel want" (19-20). Arjun Appadurai has argued that food in South Asia conveys two diametrically opposed social messages: solidarity, intimacy, or equality or relations defined by rank, distance, or segmentation (507). Bal's differential treatment and distance from the

Dalvis is primarily communicated through food he is provided. For our purposes, the questions Bal's violence brings up are: Why does the desire for animal protein outweigh all others, and what does eating well signify?

Humans are predisposed to three basic tastes, i.e., sugar, salt, and fat, which also serve to signal for a nutrient that might be useful for our body (Prescott 24). Fats, often procured through animal-based food sources, are energy-dense, and their high calorific content, along with their taste and texture, has often acted as a reliable sign throughout our evolutionary history to ingest foods that are rich in them. According to John Prescott, fats' "extreme palatability" makes them the hardest to resist in a diet (28). Some scholars have argued that there might be an innate meat hunger rooted in our physiology, leading to a yearning or craving for protein-rich foods (Harris; Morrison et al.; Griffioen-Roose et al.). However, food craving is a complex phenomenon, and socio-cultural determinants have been shown to overrule any biological proclivity we might have toward meat (Leroy and Praet 4). Basant Kumar Bal's desire for meat can be explained by resorting to two lines of arguments: firstly, meat is a luxury for Bal, causing him to want it, especially when he can observe the rest of the household partaking it, and secondly, the current changes in India point toward a greater consumption of animal-based food sources making Chatterjee's novel a prescient remark on the alterations in diet that the country might undergo.

Madhusudan Sen and Basant Kumar Bal desire meat in common, but this desire is largely unattainable for the servant. Meat for Bal is a luxury as opposed to it being easily available and common for both the Dalvi family and Sen. Marijke van der Veen, in her study of food as a luxury, has pointed out that the categories of food that feature as luxuries are the ones that are desirable as they offer a refinement in qualities linking it to sensory or physical pleasure while acting as a means of distinction because

they are hard to obtain. The social stratification in Dalvi's household is evident through meat consumption, revealing Bal's lower status as he is distanced from these foods. Moreover, Hayden reported in his study that the meat of domesticated animals in earlier Southeast Asian societies was a luxury consumed exclusively for feasts or special occasions. For this reason, meat in these societies became a special food to be cherished and relished. Hayden's findings resonate in Staples recent anthropological study of meat eating in India, where he points out that the day meat is on the table is a special day because of its difference (in terms of texture and taste) from everyday meals that are eaten to sate hunger (119-120). Considering these studies, it becomes apparent why Bal finds meat or other animal-based protein, for instance paneer or Indian cottage cheese, so enticing. It is not nutrition or survival which makes Bal yearn for these animal-based food which is never shared with him. Instead, questions of status, pleasure, and refinement mark his desire to eat meat. Interestingly, the night Bal murders the family is the only day he is able to satiate his desire for meat as he indulges in the rich beef curry made for the marriage of Nadeem Dalvi's daughter. Rather than just transporting the vat of beef from Arif Dalvi's quarters to Nadeem Dalvi's house, Bal hides himself in a field to feast on the food. The description of the beef stew is analogous to the qualities a luxury food requires. The stew is labor intensive, difficult to prepare, and offers a refinement of food, as can be evidenced by the narrator's comments: "meat fried and curried and cooked for an age in a hundred spices," 'reddish gold in hue, richly aromatic, with potatoes, carrots and roasted and powdered cashew nut and a couple unusual spices" (23, 39).

Nevertheless, one must remember that tastes are also dynamic cultural products, changing throughout history. Bal's actions, juxtaposed with studies that provide reasons for eating meat, should not be held as a justification for the same in contemporary

times. This brings us to our second point, in which the idea of eating well, as elaborated in the novel, becomes linked with animal-based protein consumption. The two other incidents other than the ones mentioned above reiterate this attribute of eating, in which meat is the main attraction. The first incident occurs when Bal is apprehended for the murder, and police wish to extract a confession from him. After threatening him with a beating, the Assistant Superintendent of police proposes to Bal the option of “top-class non-veg” upon signing the confession (66). Ironically, when confined to a prison, Bal survives on watery gruel, watery khichadi, and potato, never once expressing any desire for meat or any non-vegetarian articles (73). Reviewers have commented on the shallow characterization of Bal as a consequence of which we are never privy to his motives, desires, and wants after his murder spree (Mukherjee, “Resurrects”). Years later, when Madhusudan Sen has become the Inspector General of Prisons, he visits Bal and offers “some non- vegetarian item” as compensation for the years of solitary confinement that Bal has endured (114). In this sense, Upamanyu Chatterjee’s novel records the shifting tide of meat consumption in India. Despite being set years after Indian independence, the novel’s constant reference to meat represents a modern phenomenon. The novel directs us to present-day urbanization and increasing affluence in the country through characters accustomed to eating meat daily. The rapidly urbanizing societies of India demonstrate a drastic increase in the intake of animal-based protein, leading scholars to label India as one of the centers of meatification (Shetty 178; Jakobsen and Hansen, “Geographies of Meatification” 2). This transition in diet and nutrition set in motion through the integration of grain, oilseed, and livestock complex will have severe consequences for the environment and traditional patterns of sustainable consumption. While Chatterjee’s novel has portrayed the lust for animal products, it does not present any solutions to perhaps curb this lust. Thus, the question remains whether literature can

provide creative means of imagining our relation with animals to stem the flow of meat and animal-based products.

3.4. Unkillable, Inedible, and Unexchangeable

In literary non-fiction, depictions of animals as food are often premised around events, festivals, or rituals. The consumption of animals in the Indian context, to reiterate what I have highlighted above, is occasional and not an everyday occurrence like in the West.¹⁴ For instance, Suketu Mehta, in his narrative non-fiction *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found* describes the grisly details of the slaughter and butchering of goats and cattle that occurs during the Muslim festival of Bakri-Id in one of the poorest parts of Bombay (148-152). Similarly, Sudha Koul's memoir *The Tiger Ladies* recounts the cooking of lamb and fish on special occasions and festivals in the valleys of Kashmir. Offering meat and fish to deities, gods, and goddesses, as Koul details, was a part of the Hindu custom in Kashmir, practiced by Brahmin families such as hers (70-78). In yet another instance, S. Gopi emphasizes the importance of mutton or beef at lower-caste weddings, thus elucidating the overall exceptional nature of meat consumption in India (54-56). These three examples indicate that meat can signify different aspects depending on the context. For Mehta, the carving of animals into meat is distressing, and his witnessing the slaughter of "thousands of goats and cattle" makes him "feel sick inside" to the extent that he wishes to stop their deaths (148-150). His close proximity to the sacrifice of animals forces him to ponder over the practice of slaughter in the name of God. In contrast, Koul's distance from the animals turned into meat allows her to revel in the traditional albeit luxurious dishes that her upper-class family instructs

¹⁴ The per capita meat consumption of India at 3.69 kg is among the lowest in the world and has hardly increased in the last four decades (Jakobsen and Hansen 5).

their cook to make. She paints a vivid picture of the feast the old cook has arranged: “a tray of shoulder lamb chops cooked in milk, saffron, and herbs, then deep-fried in clarified butter and finally decorated with pure silver leaf that whispers . . . The trick is to get each piece of lamb to have two long ribs, a layer of lean meat, a layer of soft fat, and a paper-thin skin of tallow on top. Except for the bones every bit of the kabargah [fried lamb ribs] piece melts in your mouth” (70-71). In S. Gopi’s case, the flesh of a dead animal becomes a symbol for caste-based oppression, as the wedding hall the author has booked in advance gets cancelled due to his caste’s custom of serving beef at weddings.

Although this is in no way an extensive survey of narrative or literary non-fiction depicting animals as food, these three texts provide an instructive example of how animals become absent referents. Carol J. Adams postulated the concept of ‘absent referent’ to analyze how animals lose their subjectivities and independent identities. She elaborated on three ways animals become absent referents: literally, definitionally, and metaphorically. Animals through meat eating are rendered absent literally because it involves their death, and the practice of eating meat changes the way we communicate about them as we rename them into food articles, transforming them definitionally. Lastly, in the metaphorical sense, animals become absent referents since they are applied to reference something else, often to describe people’s experiences (Adams 66-67). The animal in Mehta’s anecdote is literally absent through the act of butchering, while it becomes definitionally and metaphorically absent in Koul and Gopi’s incidents, respectively. Overall, animals disappear in these narratives without much resistance because they are viewed as a collective, an edible item, or a link to different societal oppressions.

Since the so-called animal turn, scholars have been trying to uncover fiction and even non-fiction, where animals are portrayed not just for the instrumental purposes of humans but as individual beings with their own agencies and interests. One such case in the Indian context is that of Perumal Murugan's novel *Poonachi or The Story of a Goat*. The novel follows the life of a female black goat, Poonachi, and the ordeals she faces in her life in a poor rural area. Murugan writes that the arrival of Poonachi in the world was "somewhat unusual" since nothing gets revealed about her life or ancestry (4). The mystery surrounding her arrival is utilized to comment on animal agriculture, where animals are often a means to an end. In the first paragraph of the novel, Murugan emphasizes this facet of animal life, asking rhetorically, "The birth of an ordinary creature never leaves a trace, does it?" (4). Nevertheless, the author elevates Poonachi's life from the ordinary by reminding the reader about the sentience of animals. Rather than radically separating the animal from the human, Murugan explores the various ways we can relate to them despite our seemingly irreducible differences. Poonachi's life, when viewed in this manner, becomes far from the ordinary because she no longer is homogenized as yet another depersonalized and faceless farm animal. The story breaks away from the monotony of assembly lines, factory farms, and industrial operations that control all aspects of animal life. Poonachi's life begins with an unusual event in the "semi-arid stretch of land known as Odakkan Hill" where she is gifted to an old man by a giant person who "looked as if a tree trunk shorn of all branches had uprooted itself and was walking on the trail" (4-5). Believing that his "days are at an end," the giant person wanders across villages in search of a "kind-hearted man" who can "look after her properly" (5-6). The giant person does not reduce Poonachi's life to mere monetary value, and he avoids the market fairs where goats are objectified as "showpieces" (6). The ethics of care and kindness runs through the entire narrative for

animals embedded in agriculture. However, the novel also depicts the different kinds of violence inflicted on the bodies of these farm animals.

The relationships that are established between goats and humans in the novel provide routes to examining broader questions regarding animal consumption, animal agriculture, and its effects on the environment. Human worlds are marked by animal lives and deaths, leading to questions such as: who are the animals we eat; how are these animals imagined and given significance; can we come to terms with our omnivorous heritage, or do we need to redefine it in contemporary times; are there ways for a more sustainable means of consumption; what aspects of our relationship with these animals needs to improve; is being human in its various guises dependent on the deaths of animals?

Despite being published in 2019, Perumal Murugan's novel is devoid of any modern intrusion, thus representing an almost uncontaminated past. The novel has a marked absence of any timeframe and is scrupulous in avoiding modern inventions or discoveries. It can be argued that by doing so, the author's work becomes remarkably similar to indigenous works of literature, which depict the traditional ways of living with animals. The lack of modern animal farming technologies enables us to look back at traditional non-western cattle-rearing practices. Moreover, the distance from modern conditions might also be a remark on the caste-based oppression of people and their subsequent isolation from modernity. Murugan's works have often been political allegories, leading the translator of this novel to compare them with works such as George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and Mikhail Bulgakov's *Heart of the Dog* (170). In addition, the translator notes that the novel fights to preserve the "irreducible human essence" through the story of a goat (172). These comments highlight how an anthropocentric treatment of the text erases the animal by replacing it with metaphors

for human existence. One should instead focus on the intertwined nature of oppression to dismantle the hierarchies of dominations resulting from a dualistic framework of thought.

In the preface to the novel, Perumal Murugan expresses his fear of “writing about humans”, in part due to the backlash he received from right-wing organizations for his previous novel *One Part Woman* (v; Kumar, “How Perumal Murugan Was Resurrected Through Writing”). Murugan finds a recourse to this dilemma by accepting the responsibility of writing about animals. He intimates a close affinity with animals, elaborating, “There are only five species of animals with which I am deeply familiar. Of them, dogs and cats are meant for poetry. It is forbidden to write about cows or pigs. That leaves only goats and sheep. Goats are problem-free, harmless and, what’s more, energetic” (v). Murugan’s choice reflects his awareness of the religious symbolism of cows and pigs and how writing about these animals could embroil him in communal conflicts.

The other aspect that stands out from his quote, as Nandini Thiagarajan has noted in her exploration of the novel, is Murugan’s deep familiarity with the animals (360). Growing up in a small agricultural town in Tamil Nadu, Murugan’s life was surrounded by animals, which enabled him to represent them realistically. Further, his experiences in the small agricultural towns of India that are often distant from modernizations allow him to imagine animal deaths and lives in a more personalized manner.

Perumal Murugan’s novels and short stories are located in the remote and fictional places of Tamil Nadu, where animals are often reared for sustenance and survival. This is why the author provides details about the animal, such as its name, personality, and temperament. Seemaatti, the buffalo (*Four Strokes of Luck*); Veeran,

the sheep (*Seasons of the Palm*); and Poonachi, the goat, are a few examples of Murugan detailing the lives of three different kinds of animals. Critics have noted that in his representation of Poonachi, Murugan creates a story that resists the inevitable futures of agricultural animals (Thiyagarajan). Examining the entangled relations between humans and farm animals can lead to a better understanding of consumption practices contingent on their deaths. Despite its scattered slaughter incidents, Poonachi's story clearly showcases how animals are processed in human thought if regarded as intentional and individual beings or as distant, separate, and homogenous entities created for humans.

Significantly, Nandini Thiyagrajan's essay on the novel refers to the animals as "agricultural" rather than domesticated or domestic. Agriculture is a relatively neutral term when describing the position of animals with respect to humans. Domestication, on the other hand, is a term fraught with debate and remarkably hard to define (Russell 286), and scholarly opinions on animal domestication range from being considered beneficial to detrimental for both humans and animals. However, aspects of control and dominance integral to many social and biological definitions of domestication find resonance in Thiyagarajan's use of the word agricultural. Although Thiyagarajan's account elaborates on the "unnaturalness of farming animals", especially when deliberating on their intra-species interactions and intentions (368), it disregards the context within which these animals are reared. Krithika Srinivasan has noted, "Agriculture, both plant and animal, is the biggest source of livelihoods in India, and the majority of farming livelihoods (82%) belong to the small and marginal sectors" (6). Rearing animals is a key source of livelihood for small farmers in India. While criticism of livestock farming is abundant in academia, most of these are directed towards its intensification, commercialization, and commodification that has displaced traditional

patterns based on subsistence and survival. The old couple portrayed in the novel live in poverty, spending their days “raising a few crops in the half acre of land adjoining their thatched shed, grazing their goats and tending the buffalo calf” (9). Whether we can remove animals from the lives of such people who depend on them is a complicated question. However, with the way agriculture is progressing in developing countries, moving towards intensification and corporatization, these smallholder farmers and their lifeways will soon be obsolete. A single optic focus on environmental or animal concerns can ignore the struggles of people who depend on animals’ lives and deaths for survival. However, this does not mean advocating dominance or control of animals but finding measures to counter the inevitable futures of all involved. One such means is to highlight the intimate entanglements of people and animals through stories such as that of Poonachi, which are markedly different from the terrorized portrayals of faceless and nameless animals in animal farming. The latter portrayals may often shock people who are unaware of industrial animal farming operations, but they evoke sympathy rather than empathy which is the bedrock of change (Gruen).

Several scholars who intend to repudiate Western philosophies’ separation of nature and animals from man have highlighted the intertwined nature of life. Radhika Govindrajan’s concept of relatedness falls into this line of theorizing that seeks to explore the relations we establish with animals in rural settings. She uses the concept of relatedness “to capture the myriad ways in which the potential and outcome of a life always and already unfolds in relation to that of another” (3). Although Govindrajan’s notion of relatedness is indebted to Janet Carsten, who employed the term to understand the biological and social interactions in everyday life of indigenous cultures, scholars have employed a similar concept to provide insights into the entanglements of life. For instance, Donna Haraway writes about “co-habitation, co-evolution, and embodied

cross species sociality” through the figure of cyborgs and companion species (*The Companion Species Manifesto* 4). Drawing on Marilyn Strathern’s notion of “partial connections,” Haraway contests the idea of a bounded self, stating that “beings do not preexist their relatings” (*The Companion Species Manifesto* 6). I borrow Govindrajan’s concept of relatedness to explore the relations between humans and goats in the novel, which renders an animal into meat. Human-animal interactions, even in the case of sacrifice, are not entirely violent and comprise other features like care and kinship, as Govindrajan has pointed out in her study of animal sacrifice in the rural areas at the foothills of the Himalayas (36).

In the novel, we notice that the labor required to raise animals depends on practices of care and attention. The intimate connections between the goats and the old couple create bonds of kinship that cause grief and loss when severed. In contrast, the effective distance between animals and humans inhibits attachment to the animals about to be slaughtered. Before the characters, personalities, and temperaments of the goats are fleshed out, we notice this separation between the old couple and the goats they raise. The narrator mentions in passing at the beginning of the novel that Kalli’s previous litter has been sold to a butcher. The names of the kids or the goats have not been revealed yet to the reader, creating a sense of separation from the animals, often required in the social construction of meat. As the novel progresses to describe the entangled lives of the goats and the old couple, we see how each affects the other to create bonds of kinship. One such event that reveals this proximate intimacy is the accidental death of a goat kid. Semmi is one of three female goats the old couple has in the novel, and her kids Uzhumban and Oothan wander into a farm of groundnuts to feed on groundnut stalks. The farmer, noticing the movements of the stalks and fearing that a wild animal lay in ambush, throws a stone in their direction, which hits Uzhumban on

the head, killing him instantly. Two aspects come to the fore after this incident—first, the sorrow of the old couple on the death of the kid. The old woman “beats herself on the chest and wails” while the old man recalls the care it took to raise the kid, stating, “What a fine buck he was. We looked after him for a year” (55). The bonds of kinship which emerge from raising animals through everyday care and attention cause feelings of sorrow when they die. Second, the livelihood of the couple is closely connected to the rearing of animals, and accidental deaths such as that of Uzhumban leave them with no other option but to sell him to the butcher for meat. The price of meat comes at the expense of survival, which is clearly evident from the old woman’s angst directed toward their deity, “Mesayya, we came to the festival only because we have faith in you. If you inflict such big losses on us, how will we poor folk survive” (55). Further, when the kid’s meat is sold to the village, a portion is also offered to the old couple. The old woman refuses the meat saying, “I bought him up like a baby. Do I have the devil’s heart that I would consume my own child?” (56). The separation required to transform an animal into meat, making them “absent referents”, is never achieved in this instance. Instead, we witness a conflation in which the animal’s individuality takes precedence despite being rendered into food. The old woman’s despondent statement reveals this: “But our kid is alive in every bit of this meat. How can a mother have the heart to eat her own son?” (56). This kind of thinking that resists the notion of the absent referent is not limited to the old couple, since the entire village upon hearing this loss of life and feasting on the meat as a result of that loss, still agrees with the old woman’s assessment. Donna Haraway has pointed out that eating an animal one shares close bonds with is an anomaly, and she writes, “generally speaking one does not eat one’s companion animals” (*Companion Species Manifesto* 14).

Nevertheless, for people whose livelihoods depend on raising goats, selling so-called

unproductive goats to butchers is normal. In addition, the practice of sacrifice in the rural Indian context is premised on the substitution of the goat for a human in the family. The goats raised with love, care, and attention are the only ones ideal for sacrifice. However, Poonachi, the titular goat of the novel, is not a part of this inevitable loop of butchering or sacrifice that most domesticated animals must go through. The strength of the old woman's attachment to Poonachi trumps any notion of killing her, even in the case of survival. The other goats in the novel are not held to the same standard, becoming beings that blur the boundaries between companion animals, such as dogs or cats, and agricultural animals. The nanny goat Kalli's kids Peethan and Kaduvayan are sold to the butcher to meet their commitment to looking after Poonachi. Various factors intermingle to make Poonachi different from other goats that the old couple rears. Not only is Poonachi's black color a rarity, but she is a tiny goat with the capacity to birth seven kids each time compared to the two or three kids of other goats. Moreover, she was from a line of goats with a high milk yield, and her milk tasted as if "it had been boiled with jaggery" (81). While these factors contribute to making her special, the old couple's relationship with Poonachi debars her from the loop of slaughter. Thiyagarajan has noted that animal-animal relatedness can help us rethink animals as beings with their own interests, individualities, and agencies. What animals might mean to each other is the question that Thiyagarajan poses through her deconstruction of anthropomorphic accounts in the novel.

However, the intimate relations that the old couple establishes with Poonachi are different from the other goats they raise, which makes her killing unthinkable. The promised sacrifice of a buck from her first litter to a deity further consolidates her extraordinary existence with respect to other goats. Although we are provided with anthropomorphic passages describing the loss of Poonachi's goat companions through

her eyes, the old couple's emotional reactions to selling the kids to a butcher or killing a kid for sacrifice are never recorded. Except for the accidental death of Kaduvayan, the other deaths in terms of human-animal relationships can be argued as normal and ordinary in rural areas. The very act of raising animals ties the human to their eventual deaths, accidental or otherwise. In this sense, the depth of human and animal relations is the only parameter that can prevent slaughter and this becomes clear when Murugan shows the villagers discussing their desire for game meats. Poonachi's life is filled with struggles, and one such struggle occurs when she survives a wildcat attack. Fearing that such an attack might happen to their own animals, many villagers visit the old couple's house to discuss the event. But the mention of the wildcat also stirs up their appetite, with the men planning to catch it in a snare. The memory of wildcat meat "baked and rolled into a round ball like the shell of a palmyra fruit" makes the old men of the village cluck in delight, and they declare that "no other meat tasted so good" (18). Not only do these incidents in the novel reveal humans' paradoxical and inconsistent attitudes towards animals, but they also show how an emotional distance from an animal enables its easy transformation into a delicacy. Cuomo and Gruen have noted the role of moral distance and detachment in the creation and perpetuation of oppressive practices and institutions (131). They point out, "[W]hen we do not have, or choose not to have, the information or the emotional responses that bring responsibilities into our field of attention (or keep them there), we fail to be motivated toward certain members of our moral universes" (130). Overall, the old couple's affective proximity to Poonachi, which is not found in the novel with other animals, prevents her from being used as the rest of the animals.

Further, the old woman's relationship with Poonachi is that of a mother and a daughter. The old woman reminds her biological daughter about this and states, "To me,

Poonachi is like another child. She is in my arms or near my feet all the time. I simply can't live without her" (52). In various instances, the old woman regards Poonachi as her daughter, baby, and child, highlighting her close connection with the goat. Radhika Govindrajan has pointed out that villagers in Uttarakhand often drew comparisons between raising children and raising goats based on two aspects: the "exasperating" nature of children and goats and the "amount of work" involved in raising them (41-42). From the time Poonachi is brought to her house, the old woman takes incessant care of her, from being awake at night to ward off predator attacks to feeding her oilcake water or rice water through a tube to finding various indigenous leaves that the goat might chew, the old woman labors to raise the goat. Even when Poonachi gets lost in a forest, the old woman searches for her for days and eventually finds her. These everyday acts of labor create a strong emotional attachment or an affective kinship that remains till the very end of the novel.

Significantly, meat consumption is not an everyday occurrence in the novel, and for the old couple, it is irregular at best. The daily diet of the old couple comprises of watery gruel, either of rice or of some millet. For the old man, this diet is sometimes accompanied by an onion and, in times of sickness, with goat milk. In his anthropological study of meat eating in South India, James Staples has pointed out the rarity of meat consumption for rural peasant farmers (36). Staples's observation aligns with meat as a luxury consumed rarely or on special occasions. Only two instances throughout the novel exist when we see the old couple consuming goat meat. One of these instances occurs at the old couple's daughter's house when a goat is sacrificed for an annual festival. In this case, the consumption is merely alluded to, and the reader is not presented with any images of the feast. The other instance is vividly described and brings us to the question of when eating meat is justifiable.

Before analyzing the second case of meat-eating by the old couple, it is worth noting that despite the undeniable evidence for our omnivorous heritage, the human ability to survive on most things that other animals cannot is remarkable. Anderson has commented on this ability of ours, stating that “humans manage on almost anything” (12). He goes on to provide ethnographic studies that have described the wide variety of food items that humans can adapt to and even subsist on, ranging from palm sugar in Indonesia to termites in Central Africa to acorns in native nations of North America (12). Moreover, Anderson notes that hunter-gatherers in the past often relied on plant-based food or on seafood, such as fish or shellfish, rather than on meat. According to him, there is an overemphasis on meat diets and hunting in ethnographies, and he notes: “hunting is overemphasized in the work summarized in the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF), a huge compendium of ethnographic records of human cultures. This is partly because of the natural bias of male ethnographers in the Indiana Jones era of anthropology. It is also partly because many of the surviving hunter gatherer cultures were in refuge areas where plant growth was too poor to tempt settled farmers: the Subarctic, the High Plains, the South American Chaco” (25). Arguments of this kind from different disciplines are employed in animal studies to counter meat's significance and bolster the ideas of veganism.

So, when is eating meat justified? The novel answers this question emphatically by creating a scenario where all other food resources have dried up. From the beginning, the novel gives the reader a premonition of what might happen through constant references to a lack of rainfall in the region. Eventually, we see the region engulfed in a drought brought about by the complete lack of rainfall over the preceding and the ongoing year. To survive the drought, the old couple reduce their already meager food intake, eating small amounts of watery gruel. However, even those tiny

amounts are further reduced as the drought progresses, with them resorting to skipping meals. When the old man visits the market fair to sell Poonachi's buck to buy some food during the drought, he sees a vacant market with no cereals, grains, or pulses. The old man had never in his lifetime seen such a dismal scene where surviving was prioritized above all. Unable to sell the buck kid in the market fair, the old man is advised by another old man to "buy a measure of rock salt, cure the meat with salt and eat it as junk" (90). The buck kid who was supposed to be sacrificed to the village deity for a feast in the village is slaughtered by the old couple for their survival. The narrator describes the entire process: "Working carefully, the old man skinned the buck. He cut out the meat and gave it to his wife, who chopped it into small pieces. He squeezed and rinsed the intestines, and carved the head into many pieces. In the end, the kid lay on the palm frond as a heap of mutton. Slowly the old man coated all the pieces with the salt he had bought in the market" (91). After a month, the old man slaughters the other available buck kid and turns him into junk. The situation is portrayed as dire, with the old couple foraging for sedge and agave tubers, spurge fruit, or any other edible item to "quench their hunger" (92). According to Deane Curtin, the contexts of emergency and geography are examples where animal consumption can be warranted and justified (70). Curtin advances these two contexts to contest the universalism of vegan ethics and provides a framework for contextual moral vegetarianism. Unless animal consumption is entirely unavoidable, Curtin and other philosophers in the tradition of ecofeminist ethic of care advocate the practice of veganism, or vegetarianism in some cases, to resist the Western universalism of meat eating (Curtin; Twine). The old couple's predicament is such that they must resort to extreme measures to stay alive. The bleak scenario of the village is highlighted through the narrator's comment, "people were killing and eating dogs and cats" (92). Despite these circumstances, the old woman never entertains the

idea of killing Poonachi for meat. She rebuffs the old man's idea of killing Poonachi for survival, stating, "I'm ready to bury her, but I'll never allow her to be slaughtered for meat" (93). This demonstrates the old woman's affinity towards Poonachi, an affinity which is reciprocated.

Perumal Murugan's novel paints a nuanced picture of meat consumption that depends upon the relations one establishes with animals. Lori Gruen argues that to overcome the radical separation between animals and humans, we need to experience interspecies relationships. These relationships, which may even turn into friendships, require us to develop our empathetic awareness, which can translate to other contexts involving other animals (Gruen 338-339). The beings we can empathize with cannot be seen as meat, as empathizing with them makes us recognize that they are worthy of our moral attention. While the novel depicts the old couple selling the goats to the butcher for livelihood, the sacrifice of goats, and the catching of game, it leaves us with a narrative of the intricate interspecies relationship between Poonachi and the old couple.

Further, the novel is a comment on human greed, which manifests itself in the instrumentalization of nature. When the old woman arrives in another village after rescuing Poonachi from the forest, she finds refuge in an elderly woman's house. The elderly woman, or the hostess, reveals to the old woman that there was a time when the forest was home to several animals, such as wild hounds, jackals, leopards, and herds of deer. These animals were no longer found in the degraded forests, and the only animal left was the wild boar. The hostess comments, "People keep destroying everything and shoving every last bit into their mouths. How then can anything or anyone survive here apart from human beings? In the end, can even people survive for very long?" (49). The comment highlights the interconnected nature of all things and the flawed logic that turns nature into a passive resource intended just for human purposes. The novel entices

us to think about farmed animals differently and not just as a means to an end. While most scholars in the field of animal studies deem it impossible to have/own/possess farm animals without dominating or controlling them, the question the novel poses to us is whether in poor rural areas where the livelihoods of people are intricately connected to the animals they raise, can there be changes that allow these poor to lead a life without animals. In this sense, the novel can be analyzed in a multi-optic fashion where meat consumption becomes linked to other issues such as poverty, caste, gender, and so on. Although this essay has not elaborated on all the intersections, future studies can surely look into these matters. Lastly, the starvation and poverty depicted at the end of the novel is an allegory for the environmental conditions of the future. The traditional patterns of subsistence when replaced in its entirety would cause not just a spiraling of ecosystems, but also the disappearance of worlds, of both humans and animals.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the dimensions of meat consumption as elicited in two Indian novels: *The Revenge of the Non-Vegetarian* and *The Story of the Goat*. Nick Fiddes has argued that meat-eating is the “statement of our supreme power” over the natural world (2). In addition to this aspect, meat is invariably imbued with social and cultural meaning. The associations that different societies have with meat change with time and space. No monolithic or universalizing patterns emerge when viewing meat-consumption through a historical lens. However, as Richard Twine has pointed out, there is a shift to higher meat consumption rates due to economic and cultural globalization (243). The developments in twentieth-century Western culture, which promoted higher levels of meat -consumption, argues Twine, are universalizing to other parts of the world. The technological advancements that have allowed complete control of the life cycle of an animal are being replicated in other parts of the world, especially

in developing nations.

Upmanyu Chatterjee's novel, despite being set in a period where meat consumption was a luxury, showcases this Western form of consumption where animal-based foods are the norm and not the exception. In the figure of Madhusudan Sen, we see the prioritization of 'non-veg' over all other plant-based items. This normalization of food pathways based on animals has become a central facet of the urbanizing Indian public, who, distanced from the processes of slaughter and rearing, can effectively consume meat without any emotional repercussions similar to their Western counterparts. In Chatterjee's novel, however, the animal is reinscribed in the text, making it a present rather than an absent referent. This occurs through Sen's witnessing of the deaths of animals in the slaughterhouse, causing him to abandon eating meat for years. Utilizing Naisargi Dave's concept of witnessing, I demonstrate the complexities of Sen's response, which temporarily aligns with the concepts of veganism. The "multi-optics" of the novel cannot be subsumed under Sen's relinquishing of meat, and meat becomes laced with questions of caste, class, deprivation, and desire. Questions regarding what is constituted as eating well emerge in the analysis to demonstrate that the elevated status of the meat itself is a product of social imagination and construction. The value, or lack of it, assigned to meat in the Indian context is often employed to mark distinction among people, as portrayed through the character of Basant Kumar Bal in Chatterjee's novel.

Furthermore, Perumal Murugan's *The Story of a Goat* offers a nuanced response to the context of meat, especially from the viewpoint of the rural poor. Instead of humans as the titular characters, Murugan creates a story around Poonachi, a goat. My analysis of the novel is premised on Radhika Govindrajan's concept of relatedness and seeks to answer the questions of when and how animals become killable. For people

who depend on animals for their livelihood, such as the old couple depicted in the novel, the labor required to rear animals makes their consumption an absolute luxury. While we see the old couple sell the animals they raised to the butcher, they do so in return for cash crops. Their valuation of protein never measures against the hunger that buying cash crops can satisfy. Animals become unkillable, I argue, when the affective distance between them and humans collapses or becomes marginal. As the novel details, this can happen due to the everyday relations of care and labor involved in rearing animals. These experiences can, as Gruen has pointed out, lead to the development of an emphatic awareness that can be extended to other life forms. Based on intricate knowledge of animal lives, Murugan's novel contests discourses in which an animal is a unit of capital. The novel provokes the reader to examine the participation of the powerless in the new market order, where everything and everyone is measured through profitability.

Lastly, affective proximities need not be limited as detailed in the novel and the chapter. One can find oneself in many potentialities and possibilities when having the humility to approach others as different but not inferior and not entirely dissimilar from us. This, in other words, is a question of encounter and the willingness to encounter another. Mere indifference is worse than hate in this context because oppressions are built upon indifference and complicity. While stories provide an excellent model for making the reader aware of the processes that make certain others excluded, the limitations of encounters need not be necessarily abstract or literal. The more one opens oneself to the those that are othered and to the knowledge of othering, the more the binaries maintaining hierarchies will risk collapse. This will bring in better ways of conceptualizing our embeddedness with the rest of life. Even deaths and lives demand us to recognize our own implication and placement in the network of life.

4. CHAPTER FOUR

The Animal at the Ends of Time

Life has changed, not ended.

(Funeral Liturgy)

4.1 Introduction

In his essay, “Fates worse than Death” published in 1982, Kurt Vonnegut contemplates fates he considers worse than death before concluding there couldn’t possibly be one. Vonnegut inverts the military morality of death before dishonor to nothing is lost save honor. In doing so, he suggests what can save us, and he encapsulates his translation of a dream in which he envisions humanity’s descendants a thousand years from then. “I ask them how humanity, against all odds, managed to keep going for another millennium. They tell me that they and their ancestors did it by preferring life over death for themselves and others at every opportunity, even at the expense of being dishonored” (Vonnegut, “Fates Worse than Death” 49). The essay is a call for nuclear disarmament and is a condemnation of various forms of atrocities that have been committed by humans on other humans. Mass destruction causes the loss of not human life for Vonnegut but of “all higher forms of life on earth. Even those beautiful and fearless and utterly stupid sea birds, the blue-footed boobies of the Galapagos Islands, will die” (Vonnegut, “Fates Worse than Death” 47). Their stupidity stemmed from the fact that they did not fear us. Charles Darwin, in his “The Voyage of the Beagle” debarks in Maldonado, Uruguay, where he clarifies two forms of partridges, “We everywhere saw great numbers of partridges (*Nothura major*). These birds do not go in coveys, nor do they conceal themselves like the English kind. It appears a very silly bird. A man on horseback by riding round and round in a circle, or rather in a spire, so as to approach closer each time, may knock on the head as many as he pleases” (80).

For Vonnegut, the human turns out to be its own enemy and the enemy of other lifeforms due to its present state, where might underpins violence. By providing the different atrocities and their links, he distinguishes the forms humans take and can take in constructing worlds.

Vonnegut's novel *Galápagos* is a literary fabulation of his partial dream, where a form of punctuated equilibrium over a million years results in the evolution of marine mammals. Critics have often said it is one or the other form of devolution since humans have progressed in time to have smaller brains and smaller skulls. For instance, Mustazza puts it across as "gradually reforming people by re-forming them, bringing humankind's form and priorities into line with those of the rest of the animal kingdom" (55). Vonnegut places the human in the so-called natural order of things or a food chain. The mistake is, of course, not asking why where its form and priorities are not in line in the first place. Secondly, how did he differentiate himself from the rest of the animal kingdom? The two questions cannot be answered without the other.

Andrew John Hicks traces the praise Vonnegut revealed he received from Stephen Jay Gould, the evolutionary biologist: "Gould had 'dropped me a note [about Galapagos], saying it was pretty good science" (110). Critics have often traced *Galápagos* to Charles Darwin and his theories of natural selection. However, it should be traced to the concept of punctuated equilibrium, which was provided by Stephen Gould and Niles Eldridge. Eckstrand simplifies their theory as this, "punctuated equilibrium claims that evolution is not a gradual process that shifts one form to another. Instead, variation accumulates through periods of relative stasis, followed by radical shifts over relatively short periods of time. This process creates new forms before returning to periods of relative stasis for extended periods of time. The shift often occurs in a small and isolated segment of the population. Instead of seeing the slow

evolution of a large group of organisms towards a new form, one sees a subsection of the group suddenly break off from the rest of the group and rapidly evolve into a different form” (433).

The question is, therefore, not if Vonnegut parodies science in Galapagos, which would be a question of evolutionary biology, the science. However, the question is, how does the process of evolution dismantle humans and animals from within? It is, therefore, viewed occasionally as a posthumanist novel, as discussed later. This chapter shows employing the concept of “becoming-animal” and “cyborg” inverts what is considered being human to it being a working arrangement between the bodies of nature and culture, entities that cannot be conceived without the other and are formed in a singular system. Haraway, and Deleuze and Guattari’s systems do not discredit difference and often entrench it in place of identity or Being or beings. Becomings are perilous and haunting, as Deleuze’s examples from H.P. Lovecraft indicate, and are often to disrupt the status quo. It is the opening of a new style of perception that frees one from presupposed goals and objectives. Kafka is the author they are fond of because his stories allow one to conceive oneself beyond their current ways of thinking. As Claire Colebrook puts it in her work on Deleuze, “The fascination for the animal is a fascination for the world seen, not from an already organised position of opinion, but seen anew” (138-139). This shift occurs since Vonnegut’s novel is an allusion to the people to come, not something that has already happened or something that will happen in terms of progress towards ideals, but as an opening to alternative modes of existence. This is a requirement because Deleuze’s philosophy does not have good and evil but has a concept of good and bad. And good, even at its most basic, should not be a restriction of becoming. In philosophical terms, good is an increase in the power of the body to act and bad is the decrease in the power of the body to act (Buchanan, “Fish” 83).

Therefore, all forms of becoming are always the minor term and in relation to the privileged terms (the form being takes in discursive and non-discursive practices of being human). The chapter discusses the ways the people to come are cyborg figures, not necessarily human or animal, transversal figures that reside at the borders. This is the narrative of “becoming-animal” where both are changed in tandem with each other. As the human changes in the singular system that accumulates variations and differences, a different approach than the one which is maintained as status quo to inhibit differences at the expense of innumerable lifeforms be conceptualized. This is the positive ontology of power, not of capture but of expression not constrained by the universal man. Haraway states better, “Cyborg imagery can help express two crucial arguments in this essay: first, the production of universal, totalizing theory is a major mistake that misses most of reality, probably always, but certainly now; and second, taking responsibility for the social relations of science and technology means refusing an antiscience metaphysics, a demonology of technology, and so means embracing the skillful task of reconstructing the boundaries of daily life, in partial connection with others, in communication with all of our parts” (*Cyborg Manifesto* 67).

Kurt Vonnegut’s *Galapagos* (originally published in 1985) imagines humans a million years in the future as ecologically embedded beings who no longer negate or oppose nature through their activity. The novel’s narrator, a headless ghost, skips between two timeframes, that of the 1980s and its near future to a million years later, to chronicle the changes in humans. A few other Vonnegut characters have also had the ability to time travel, albeit non-linearly. Billy Pilgrim, famously, gets “unstuck in time” while Winston Niles Rumfoord can foretell events and destinies after being caught in a “chrono-synclastic infundibulum” (Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse- Five* 19; *The Sirens of Titan* 8). However, it is with H.G. Wells’s *The Time Machine* that *Galapagos* shares

some affinity, in the sense that both these tales rapidly progress through time to envisage a radically altered humanity. In Wells's imperialist romance, the Time Traveller's encounter with the two human tribes of the future reinforces his assumed moral and intellectual superiority over them (Cantor & Hufnagel 38-39). He adjudges the tribes as inferior to him, regarding the Eloi as puerile and docile and the Morlocks as repulsively "inhuman" and "ape-like" (Wells 66, 54). Wells's novella places the Victorian man on top, valorizing his rationality and contrasting it with the passivity and animality of the future human. While Wells's dystopian fiction clearly marks the animal as the absolute other of humankind, Vonnegut's narrative can be read as an attempt to establish a continuity of relations that challenge human exceptionalism and supremacy.

In the novel, we are presented with a mismatched group of individuals who, through uncanny coincidences and accidents, are brought together to the seaport of Guayaquil in Ecuador to take the much-publicized "Nature Cruise of the Century", a cruise that would take them to the Galapagos Islands to rediscover the wildlife. A chain of events instigated due to a worldwide financial crisis leads a starving Peru to declare war on Ecuador, which in turn causes the surviving members of the group to escape on the cruise ship along with the drunk and bumbling Adolf von Kleist, the Captain of the cruise. The Captain's navigational ineptitude and sheer fortune results in the luxury cruise ship running aground on the island of Santa Rosalia in the Galapagos archipelago. This remote island becomes a safe harbor for these survivors, who luckily evade not just the wars but also the pestilence that has enveloped the world. Only those stranded on Santa Rosalia remain untouched by the bacterium that has extinguished the rest of humanity by devouring the eggs in human ovaries. The narrator thus deems the island as the "cradle of all humankind" (118) as the women on the island become the progenitors of furry and aquatic humanity, with "smaller skulls" housing a smaller brain

(234). Vonnegut directs his satire toward the big human brain, which he, through the eyes of Leon Trout, the narrator, deems as “irresponsible, unreliable, hideously dangerous, wholly unrealistic” and “simply no damn good” (28). The novel is a scathing criticism of the troubles that plague humanity, generated by an overthinking machine in the form of an oversized brain which symbolizes excess instead of moderation. To rectify the evolutionary error, which caused humans to have “bigger brains” (11), Vonnegut manipulates Darwin’s theory of natural selection and descent with modification in the narrative. The descendants of the humans marooned on Santa Rosalia, who appear in the novel after a gap of million years showcase modifications to their physical and mental selves, bringing them into a state of harmony with nature.

The unconventional plotline of the novel, with its cosmic time shifts, detached and impersonal style, and shallow characterization, inhibit any straightforward summary. Critics have pointed out that the novel reads like a textbook in biochemistry and is “particularly flat and affectless in tone” (Hicks 111). It is perhaps due to a combination of these factors that *Galapagos* is one of the lesser-known works of Vonnegut, never featuring in newspaper or digital lists of great Vonnegut novels (Self, “Where to Start”). This lack of appreciation for the novel also translates into academia, with few prominent scholarly essays written on it. Scholars tackle the experimental subject matter of the novel by generally resorting to one of these four broad discursive frameworks, i.e., narrative theory, extinction/apocalypse, mythology, and posthumanism. For Oliver W. Ferguson and Marco Caracciolo narrative theory provides a unique means of analyzing the novel, especially due to its atypical narrative strategy. However, they employ narrative theory to elucidate two very different aspects. The history of Leon Trout, rather than his million-year story, becomes for Ferguson a conduit to recognizing the common ills of the 20th-century world, such as wars,

environmental degradation, economic crises, or domestic issues (233-235). In contrast, Carraciolo's critique of *Galapagos* adapts Monica Fludernik's notion of "narrative experientiality" which he defines as a "complex set of negotiations across levels of experience — conceptual and affective, cognitive and cultural" (312). Carraciolo argues that for readers, the imagination of narrative spaces is an embodied phenomenon based on their real-life experiences. Further, Carraciolo asserts that unorthodox narratives like *Galapagos*, which imagine worlds beyond the human scale, can disturb our hegemonic cultural templates to open up new perspectives that challenge anthropocentric views (304-306). Vonnegut's novel, which envisions the proliferation of a radically transformed humanity from the brink of extinction, is especially susceptible to critiques of the Anthropocene and apocalypse. C. Parker Krieg's essay on the novel reads the human in the Anthropocene and questions the apparent erasure of social differences due to the more-than-human scale of reference in such texts. Unlike Carraciolo's text which finds in the more than human scales of the narrative a means to challenge anthropocentrism, Krieg's text firmly locates itself in the discourses and structures of feeling that emerge at any given point in history (186). The two scholars, Robert T. Tally Jr. and Peter Freese have read the novel from the perspective of an apocalypse and have explored the world's impending destruction as a means of renewal and rebirth of the human race. However, Tally Jr. and Freese diverge on changes that ensue once the human race starts over. Freese sees the changes in humanity as an "irreversible regression" (168) and adjudges the novel as a "bitter and pessimistic comment on man's tendency towards self-annihilation" (170). On the other hand, Tally Jr. emphasizes the element of "hope" (113-114) in his essay and contends that the salvation achieved through the becoming animal of the human provides the novel with a utopian promise. *Galapagos* mingles biblical allusions with Charles Darwin's theories of natural

selection and descent with modification. This fusing of science and myth results in Leonard Mustazza labeling the novel as a “Darwinian Eden”, where he links the primal innocence of a transformed humanity to ignorance (55). Other scholars who have assessed the novel as an archetypal myth have adopted Joseph Campbell’s theories of mythology to decode the chance driven creation of a new humanity (McInnis; Raj and Kumar, “Playing God”). Critics have often viewed the transformed humans as posthuman, although rarely applying posthumanist theories to unravel the intricacies of the novel. For instance, Andrew John Hicks chapter on *Galapagos* written for his book “*Posthumanism in the Novels of Kurt Vonnegut*” despite summarizing some of the concepts of posthumanist thinkers like Donna Haraway, Cary Wolfe and N. Katherine Hayles is an exercise to examine the inherent desirability of reason, intellect, and self-consciousness in the context of social Darwinism. Moreover, Raj and Kumar have argued that the novel’s plot resembles the creation myth of Joseph Campbell and caters to tenets of humanism rather than posthumanism (*Dissecting the Doubtful*). The positions outlined in this brief overview, with the exception of Carraciolo’s essay which questions anthropocentrism through narrative theory, have ignored how the novel unsettles the boundaries between the human and the animal. In most of these criticisms the animal either disappears or is conceived as a lack in relation to the human. Several critics have maintained that humanity’s gradual transformation to seal-like or dolphin-like creatures is retrogressive or regressive, and should be viewed as a metaphor for the author’s dissatisfaction with the current conditions of the world (Freese 170; Mustazza 55; Ferguson 235). Even for someone like Robert T Tally Jr. who views apocalypse in the novel with understated optimism, the transformation results in humans losing the characteristics that defined humanity (114). This kind of perspective often arises from imagining the human as an impermeable unity radically separated from the animal. The

appeal of Vonnegut's novel, as I demonstrate, lies in the fact that it provides a vision of the human self as a hybrid, bound in a tight coupling with the animal. However, it is not exclusively in the transformation of the future human that we find instances of seemingly disparate entities (animal/human; nature/culture; organic/inorganic) entering into a relation to create fractured identities that resist homogenization. Many of the characters in the novel before the time jump associate themselves or are associated with various non-human animals signaling the beginning of an interrelationality that undermines divisive dualisms. The essay explores the disintegration of the human-animal distinction, in the context of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's theories of "becoming- animal" and through Donna Haraway's figure of the cyborg. These thinkers highlight the tenuous construction of the human in Western thought as a coherent and bounded entity often represented by European, white, male, and rational (Haraway, *Cyborg Manifesto* 52; Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 292). Their concepts, namely the cyborg and becoming, dispute the notion of fixed or stable identities, and propound the idea of a world enmeshed in "potent fusions" (Haraway, *Cyborg Manifesto* 14) and "unnatural participations" (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 241-242) between heterogenous things. Aligning with these thinkers, I argue that the human in the novel although modelled on Darwin's theories of natural selection breaks the purity of lineage and passes into a zone of indiscernibility where it cannot be categorized as either human or animal. The cyborg figuration or the becoming-animal (demarcated by fragmentary identities, blurred boundaries, and relationality with animals) in the cosmic time scale of the novel entails a reading of the human as a member in the complex interdependent network of earth who affects and is affected by other bodies.

Further, the essay explores the deconstruction of fixed, normative, or stable identities of humans in the context of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's theories of "becoming- animal" to highlight the points of contact with the animal other, where the human crosses ceaselessly into the domain of the animal. Following Darwin, Vonnegut's *Galapagos* challenges human exceptionalism and establishes a continuity between humans and non-human animals in which there can be no valid claims to dominance or superiority. The evolutionary trajectory of humans presents an intriguing situation where they can be viewed as a combination of animal and human powers and not as a self-enclosed entity. The humans of the far future in *Galapagos* exhibit a unique case of transversal becoming such that they are indiscernible from aquatic mammals like seals or dolphins, thereby blurring the boundaries that separate animals from humans. By compromising the species barrier, the animal essence indicates to the human "the way out" or a "line of escape" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 35). The animal, in this Vonnegut's tale, offers the human a means to escape the modes of thought patterned on dualisms to reimagine an ecologically balanced humanity.

4.2 Subverting Typically Human Properties

In *Galapagos* Leon Trout, holds the "big brains" of humans as responsible for the ecological crisis of the planet (16, 141). After losing his head in a shipyard to a falling sheet of steel, Leon becomes an omnipresent force in the novel, observing humans over a million years, drawing on Charles Darwin's theories of evolution and natural selection. His overwhelming response is that the oversized brains of humans were "fatal defects" (16), which threatened the survival of humans and non-humans alike, and he claims catastrophes as varied as famines and wars were its consequence. The novel's solution for an ecological balance is a decrease in the size of the brain as humans evolve over a million years into furry aquatic mammals. Leon frequently reiterates the human

brain's supposedly abnormal proportions, asserting it was "much too big to be practical", "preposterously huge", and "oversized" (70, 138, 16). The human in Western history is defined in opposition to the animal, premised largely on abstract properties that are absent or lacking in the animal. The distinguishing trait of humans of the near future is their propensity for excess, symbolized by their brain size. The "three kilogramme" (16) brains are described as not just an unnecessary impediment but as excessive, beyond what is required for survival. Leon observes in his ghostly state that humans are the only species known to him who indulge in "experiments with unlimited greed and ambition" (150). Excess, notes Carrie Packwood Freeman in her article on human and animal boundaries, might well be a characteristic trait of humans that causes them to exploit or harm non-humans at an unprecedented scale against the principles of nature (20-22). The brain's "excess capacity" (161) leads humans to have "impossible dreams of increase" (184) at the expense of the environment and their selves.

Several incidents in the story validate excess as the seemingly essential trait, and an instructive example can be found in the characterization of Andrew MacIntosh. MacIntosh was a billionaire who could give stirring speeches on human activities that endangered the animals on the islands of the Galapagos, reproduced from his "cover to cover" (85) reading of *National Geographic*. But MacIntosh's overzealous attempt at defending animals from humans turns out to be a façade as he is revealed to be either a director or a major stockholder in companies that were "notorious damagers of the water or the soil or the atmosphere" (86). Delineated as a pathological personality by the narrator, he is deemed "incapable of caring much about anything" (86). Nevertheless, MacIntosh displays an excessive desire or mania "for claiming as his own property as many of the planet's life-support systems as possible" (67). In the initial setting of the novel, i.e., the 1980s and its near future, the human trait of excess can be

considered their distinctive quality. However, Vonnegut disallows any feature that might be regarded as typically human, and the human ability to do things to excess is subsequently erased in the portrayal of the future human. The humans who appear in the novel after a million years have smaller skulls with decreased brainpower to facilitate a streamlined head better equipped for catching fish underwater. Humans with smaller brains become a part of the natural order where they regularly fall prey to killer whales and sharks. Like the hammerhead shark or the dog Kazakh in the novel, who have no particular use for a bigger brain, the future humans are content to spend their days languidly, surrounded by white beaches, coconut palms, and lagoons.

The big brain typifying excess is but one crucial element in the list of quintessential human properties the novel tries to subvert. According to Derrida, “the list of “what is proper to man” always forms a configuration. . . it can never be limited to a single trait and it is never closed” (*The Animal Therefore* 5). Subsequently, Leon Trout, conjectures that the purpose of the human brain might be to “control his hands”, which he describes as “clever” and “cunningly articulated” (215, 54, 215). Leon goes so far as to claim that one of the most important modifications in the design of the future human was their hands turning into flippers, as a result of which they achieved equilibrium with their surroundings. Jacques Derrida critiquing Heidegger’s conception of the human hand, notes, “man’s hand *gives and gives itself, gives and is given*” in opposition to the animal’s foot, paw or talon which can “only *take hold of, grasp, lay hands on the thing*” (*Heidegger’s Hand* 175). In this sense, the human hand’s essence, distinguishing it from an animal’s limbs, is the ability to give without a need to take. However, in *Galapagos*, the human hand is not associated with giving since it is controlled by an organ obsessed with greed rather than generosity. Vonnegut ridicules the connection of the human hand with gifting or giving, for in his world, only misery

has been inflicted through them, from the endless cruelty of wars to large-scale biospheric degradation. As a consequence of their modifications, the humans of the far future, proclaims Leon, “are so innocent and relaxed now, all because evolution took their hands away” (151). These humans enter a reciprocal relationship with nature, erasing the divide created by the give-and-take concept.

In addition, the novel undermines those standard divisions that traditionally mark the animal as the other. Language, for instance, has been regarded in Western philosophy as one of the fundamental properties that separate humans from animal kind. In Galapagos, this dualism that deprives animals of language is satirized through Roy Hepburn, a millwright in Vonnegut’s infamous fictional city of Ilium. We are presented here with a man who does not just replicate the unique calls of birds but can also communicate with them. In contrast to Roy, who “could talk to birds in their own languages” (181), his wife Mary is not as gifted in relating to animals primarily because “her ancestors were notoriously tone deaf on both sides of her family” (39). This description of Mary and her ancestry can be viewed as a metaphor for Western traditions which until recently have been either dismissive or unresponsive to the question of the animal.

Moreover, her master’s degree in zoology is an allegory for science’s anthropocentric orientation.¹⁵ Mary is an ironic figure, and she cannot be associated with technoscientific rationality’s claims that humans can overcome nature through science and technology. As a general biology teacher in the high school of Ilium, her methods convey a desire to surpass her discipline’s objective and information-oriented

¹⁵ Vonnegut has employed the genre of science fiction in his previous novels to remark on what he considers as one of the important problems confronting humanity, which is the “deification of science and technology” (Zins 170).

approach. Rather than teaching about animals as passive objects, Mary encourages her students to creatively imagine the blue-footed boobies, frigate birds, and other animals of the Galapagos islands through a poem or an essay. Outlining Western discourse's predisposition to observe, analyze and reflect on the animal without giving the animal the capacity to address the human, Jacques Derrida says, "thinking concerning the animal, if there is such a thing, derives from poetry" (*The Animal Therefore* 7). Mary's ability to step outside the objectifying glare of science and evoke a sense of mystery and charm for animals, even to denote things like the courtship dance of birds as "art" or "religion" (92), exemplifies how Vonnegut's characters constantly challenge human exceptionalism.

Science and technology in *Galapagos* are characterized by uncertainties, paving a path for different interpretations of the same phenomenon. Scientists with their "big brains" and "cunning instruments" (12), remarks Leon in the novel's opening pages, cannot crack the mystery surrounding the existence of animals on the Galapagos Islands. Leon goes on to provide a number of theories that might solve the riddle of how the animals might have reached the Islands, but in doing so, he mingles implausible superstitions, religious beliefs, and scientific hypotheses. In contrast to monological science, which conceives nature in mechanistic terms as a passive entity that could be completely decoded for the instrumental purposes of man, the novel presents a scenario where science is unable to resolve the simple puzzles of nature. Ironically, a microorganism surfacing at the Frankfurt Book Fair gradually causes the extinction of all humans except those stranded on the islands of Santa Rosalia. The wiping out of humanity as a result of a microorganism devouring the eggs in the ovaries of humans parallels the demise of giant tortoises on the Galapagos islands, who were tormented by rodents feeding on their eggs. As this incident portrays, humans must be viewed as one

among the various animals that inhabit the planet and equally vulnerable to the enigmatic operations of nature. Vonnegut utilizes the concept of natural selection to compromise all hierarchies in which humans ranked themselves supreme as he brings “human-kind’s form and priorities into line with those of the rest of the animal kingdom” (Mustazza 55). However, scholars have argued that the modifications in design humans undergo due to natural selection should be viewed as “mindless progression” or even as an “irreversible regression of predatory man into a harmless and brainless link in the natural food-chain” (Caracciolo 308; Freese 168).¹⁶ In similar terms, C. Parker-Kreig notes in his reading of humans in the Anthropocene, “the only thing worse than having big brains... is not having one at all” (181). The dualistic split visible in these debates privileging the brain over the body or culture over nature is confronted through the appearance of the humans of the far future, whom Leon regards as “modern” (125). Darwin conceived natural selection as a progressivist and teleological force, analogous to God or nature in intelligence and responsible for improving organisms morally and physically (Richards 64-66). If we believe reports that Vonnegut wanted to be as scientifically sound as possible in the novel (Allen 296-297; Moore 7), then the evolution of the human is a progression rather than a retrogression. In Vonnegut’s world, the modern humans dynamically integrated into nature are a better alternative to a humanity that is increasingly likely to destroy the world due to its “own stupidity” (Zins 170). Noticeably, *Galapagos* not only challenges dualisms that paint the world in binaries, but it also unsettles the conventional modes of thought that deem human identities stable. In the next section, I highlight the

¹⁶ Andrew John Hicks states that the Darwinian evolution replicated in the novel is premised on the notion “that there is simply no narrative, no meaningful progression, in the macroscopic process of natural selection” (113).

implications of considering the human identity, not in terms of being but in terms of Deleuze and Guattari's theories of becoming.

4.3 From Unity to Multiplicity

Galapagos is a text replete with innumerable contradictions that do not resolve into a whole. For this reason, we find in the novel situations and events which defy formal logic. Leon Trout, the narrator of the novel, loses his best friend and worst enemy to a hand grenade; the Reserve Admiral and the Captain of the cruise ship Adolf von Kleist is a clueless navigator who is unaware of how a ship functions; humans starve despite the plenty of food on the planet; Kazakh is a dog that cannot bark, and so forth. While some situations are blatantly self-contradictory, others are more subtly layered paradoxes that bring together two ideas or beliefs that are antithetical to each other. So, natural selection, a scientific hypothesis defining the process of evolutionary change in the novel, culminates in individuals entering the "blue tunnel into the Afterlife" post their deaths (58, 64). However, the cyborg position of the novel does not just highlight the contradictions; it also reflects a confusion of boundaries. Vonnegut's choice of implementing Darwin's theories in the novel initiates the blurring of categories by establishing a continuity between humans and non-human animals. Darwin's theories decentered the notion of an absolute difference between humans and animals by demonstrating that we have descended from animals and will continue to be animals. The imaginary island of Santa Rosalia in the Galapagos archipelago provides Vonnegut with an ironic setting to unfold his Darwinian revision of humanity.

4.3.1 *Symbolic Hybrids*

The Galapagos islands are unique since most of the animals inhabiting this small group of islands are endemic to the place. Nevertheless, what makes the island noteworthy in the context of the novel is the distinctive adaptations of the animals, which mix and

match across species lines. This is not to suggest that the animals invalidate scientific classifications but that they challenge our common interpretations, which leads Leon Trout to label the island's animals as "freakish" (23). For instance, Leon Trout states that the flightless cormorant is a "very strange" bird and describes the attributes that make it so (34). He elaborates, "This bird was black and appeared to be the size of a large duck, but it had a neck as long and supple as a snake. The queerest thing about it, though, was that it seemed to have no wings, which was almost the truth. ... Its wings were tiny and folded flat against its body, in order that it might swim as fast and deep as a fish could" (34). Leon's description of the flightless cormorant is not based on its species or genus characteristics but on what its body is capable of in relation to other bodies. Thinking in these terms provides an alternative schema to view the animals as an assemblage of disparate entities instead of lifeforms embedded in rigid human categories. The fluidity of such an approach brings different things into a dynamic relationship blurring clear distinctions. Although Vonnegut utilizes Darwin's scientific theories, he often creatively imagines the abilities of the Galapagos animals, which shifts the discussion from what a body is to what a body can do.

In contrast to the flightless cormorant, which combines the capacities of differing lifeforms, the marine iguana breaches the organic/inorganic border. As the only extant marine lizard, the marine iguana's dive would be hard to compare with any of the members of its largely terrestrial family. Leon circumvents this apparent difficulty as he links the dive of the marine iguana to that of a submarine, thereby connecting the man-made and the natural realm through the action of this animal. The marine iguana, which is "no more dangerous to lifeforms of any sort" exclusively feeds on seaweed and needs heat to digest it (78). Leon explains the process as: "it is using itself for a covered stewpot, getting hotter and hotter while the sunshine cooks the

seaweed” (78). Here again, we find Leon depicting the process of digestion, an act on the part of the marine iguana, through a relation with an inorganic man-made product, a stewpot. Similarly, the mating ritual or the dance of the blue-footed boobies ends in the birds forming “a tower . . . a single structure” with their beaks pointing skywards and their “sinuous necks as erect as flagpoles” (89). Contradictory worlds merge in the depictions of these animals to create symbolic hybrids outlined through their relations with organic and inorganic bodies.

Despite going beyond the categories that contain them, the island’s animals fail to decenter the stable identity of the human subject. The sternest challenge to the humanist notion of fixed identity, or the logic of being, comes through the human interactions in the novel with the animal. Most characters in this seemingly preposterous tale of chance and coincidences have a direct or indirect form of contact with animals. Moments of relationality with the animal other pervade the story to evoke a sense of intermediacy, where human identity is in constant flux. In Vonnegut’s infamous fictional city of Ilium, we find Roy Hepburn, a millwright with no formal education beyond high school who can “talk to birds in their own languages” (39). Upon being discharged from the Navy, Roy hitchhikes his way to the state park in Indiana in search of the ivory-billed woodpecker, a species presumed to be extinct. His future wife, Mary, has been camping at the same park and is awoken by the call of a whippoorwill. After racing through the woodland floor to pinpoint the source of the sound, she is surprised to find Roy in a thicket of briars “whistling the piercing call of a whippoorwill” which is so uncannily similar to that of the bird that it disorients Mary (180). The familiar call of the bird is displaced onto the unfamiliar form of the human, causing Mary to mistake Roy for a bird. At this moment, Roy and whippoorwill enter a common zone where the distinction between this “very strange” man and the bird becomes unclear (180).

Emerging from the thicket he has slept in, Roy confirms his alliance across species lines to Mary when he states, “I wasn’t doing anything a bird wouldn’t do” (181).

Animals often occupy Roy’s thoughts in the novel, especially later on in his life when a brain tumor sends him into a delirious state. The brain tumor induces in Roy false memories about an experiment he conducted on animals for the government, tethering “two of every sort of animal” to the stakes to be atom bombed (40). Roy’s vivid memories are an ironic duplication of the experiments early vivisectionists performed, who, influenced by the Cartesian dualism of mind and body, reduced non-human animals to mindless machines that merely respond to external stimuli. However, unlike the vivisectionists who dismissed the cries of animals as a mechanical response, the experiment overwhelms Roy with sorrow, and he finds the whole ordeal of tying animals to stakes “very hard” (40). Roy’s despair over the experiment is magnified due to his relationship with the animals, which is built on trust and friendship. The narrator points out Roy’s remarkable ability: “Animals all trusted Roy. . . .There was no dog or farm animal, not even a guard dog at GEFFCo or a sow with piglets, so vicious that Roy couldn’t, within five minutes or less, turn it into a friend of his” (40). The cruel experiment further enables Roy to identify empathically with the animals since he considers himself equally a victim of it. In Roy’s fabricated world, the radiation he absorbed during the experiment gave him a brain tumor and prevented him from having children. Without progeny and facing imminent death, Roy reflects on his shared finitude with other lifeforms and comments, “We Hepburns are extinct as the dodoes... “The Irish Elk”... “The ivory-billed woodpecker”... “Tyrannosaurus rex”... “Smallpox”... “George Washington”” (42). These moments of relationality between Roy and other lifeforms occur in the semiotic realm and are premised on comparisons,

metaphors, invented memories, and mistaken identities. In this sense, Roy's connections with the animal are purely symbolic and do not involve transforming into the other.

4.3.2 Nature-Culture Assemblages

The following few examples, however, bridge the separation between the literal and the symbolic to create figures that cannot be located on either side of the human/non-human divide. These examples are better representations of Donna Haraway's cyborg, which, as she maintains, is a "condensed image of both imagination and material reality" (7).

Like the cyborg, an eclectic mix of the material and the semiotic dimension, these examples are not free of materialism, as they often entail a literal transformation. At the novel's beginning, we are introduced to James Wait, a "supremely successful swindler" who creates multiple aliases to deceive widowed women of their savings (15). Wait is described as a "fisherman" who uses a price tag on his shirt to bait women into speaking to him (15). Fishes become a metaphor for the unsuspecting women that Wait lures and pauperizes. Ironically, the humans of the far future are labeled as "fisherfolk", showcasing their reliance, much like most aquatic animals, on the fish they catch (148). The transformation of future humans into aquatic mammals deconstructs the division between the material and the semiotic since the human may symbolize a fish in one moment and be a fisherfolk in the next, implying that the human identity is caught in a relation with fishes and can no longer be conceptualized in terms of a binary based on what one is and what one is not.

Yet another more obvious example of relationality can be found in Kanka-bonos devouring Selena MacIntosh's seeing eye dog Kazakh. Prior to reaching Santa Rosalia, the passengers of the cruise ship *Bahia de Darwin*, primarily due to Captain von Kleist's complete incompetence, are lost at sea without food. Among the passengers are the seven Kanka-bono women, who eat Kazakh after roasting her in the cruise ship's

oven. Kazakh is most certainly not a genuine representative of her species, and akin to Donna Haraway's OncomouseTM or companion species, she is a material-semiotic figure who disturbs the binary opposition between nature and culture. Leon recounts Kazakh as a female German shepherd who was not "really a female" as a consequence of the surgeries which removed her sex organs to inhibit her "sexual urgencies" that could have possibly distracted her from her guide dog duties (45). Moreover, due to her training, Kazakh never indulged in any "natural canine activities". Leon observes, "Kazakh never barked or played with other dogs or investigated interesting smells or noises or chased animals which had been the natural prey of her ancestors because, when she was a puppy, big-brained human beings had showed her hate and withheld food whenever she did any of those things" (45). Equally a product of human intervention and nature, Kazakh undermines the humanist notions of biological purity, which Haraway notes emerged with the biological classification system of Carlos von Linnaeus (*Primate Visions* 9). It is this hybrid figure which the Kankabono women, stranded on the cruise ship for days and starving, decide to make a meal of. The impact of dining on Selena McIntosh's dog is perhaps diminished by the fact that these women are from the rainforest with their own values and customs and that desperate times necessitated such measures.

Nevertheless, Leon describes this incident as the Kanka-bono women "gnawing the bones of their innocent sister Kazakh" (202). Consuming a dog delineated as their sister is equal to feeding on a human, for this forest-dwelling tribe associated with cannibalism. The different ways of relating to Kazakh suggest that the human identity is never ahistorical or universal and must be recognized as multiple. Donna Haraway argues that in relationships of significant otherness, none of the entities involved can "pre-exist the relating, and the relating is never done once and for all" (*Companion*

Species Manifesto 12). For Leon, the German shepherd is without the properties of a dog; for the blind Selena McIntosh, Kazakh is a pet and a guide dog, while for the Kankabonos, the dog is a blood relation as well as flesh to be consumed. These examples indicate that the animal identity is constructed in relation to humanity rather than in opposition to it.

Furthermore, beginning with Akiko, the daughter of Hisako, and the computer genius Zenji Hiraguchi, we witness modifications in humans in the novel that permeate the species barriers redefining human identity. The dropping of an atom bomb in the town of Hiroshima exposes Hisako, a teacher of the Japanese art form of Ikebana, to radiations that alter her DNA sequence. The doctors, concerned about the genes the pregnant Hisako would pass to her fetus, run a series of tests on the fetus to determine if there have been any abnormalities. But their tests are unable to detect the “minor defects” in Hisako’s genes that cause her to beget a daughter who is “covered with a fine, silky pelt like a fur seal’s” (53). Under the unchanged circumstances of the planet, Akiko’s mutations would have been regarded as a defect, an imperfection in the biological design of the human, othering her and making her an outsider. Leonard Mustazza argues that in a scenario where the human world was not on the verge of a collapse, Akiko would be relegated as “a freak, a loser, a person to be shunned” (61). However, on the remote island of Santa Rosalia, her modifications are advantageous, allowing her to better adapt to her surroundings than other survivors, as she is protected from sunburn, the abrasiveness of lava, cold weather, and the chilly waters of the sea. Without cloth or shelter to protect them from the sun or the chills at night, the survivors of the island come to “envy” Akiko for her fur coat (157). The survivors wish for a fur coat of their own and are dissatisfied with wearing “fragile capes and hats made of feathers tied together with fish guts” (157). Despite the projection of perceived animal

characteristics onto Akiko in the novel, the first colonists of the island do not view her changes as a defect, thereby posing a challenge to rigid classifications of what counts as a human. In time Akiko becomes the first “venerated matriarch” of Santa Rosalia and effectively bestows her fur coat to her progeny, accelerating the course of changes in humans (219).

Akiko’s birth demarcates the collapse of distinctions between the natural and the man-made world for humanity as she is as much a result of the atomic bomb as natural processes. In addition to transgressing the nature/culture divide, Akiko’s changes suggest a connection with the animal at the very molecular level of humanity. Akiko’s encounter with the animal other occurs genetically, at a microscopic junction point, crossing into the territory of pinnipeds, commonly known as seals. Leon Trout highlights her deviance from the normative standards of humanity by commenting, “she would be much like her mother on the inside, but in a different sort of skin” (53). With the birth of Akiko, the human subject loses its unitary identity since Akiko not only merges the organic and the inorganic in the form of atomic radiation polluting human reproduction, but she also brings together the different species and kingdoms through her modification. The seal-like fur coat inverts beliefs of the biological purity of species and represents an alliance unconstrained from Darwin’s notion of descent with modification that espoused a linear nature of evolutionary change delineated through genealogy, kinship, descent, and filiation.

Significantly, Haraway’s cyborg figuration and Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming repudiate the arborescent structure of evolution to imagine the individual as a multiplicity comprised of complex inter-relations between categorically distinct entities. In rejecting Darwin’s notion of biological descent, these thinkers anticipate the developments in evolutionary theory. For instance, evolutionary biologist Lynn

Margulis and ecology theorist Dorion Sagan have challenged the cladistic or phylogenetic concept of species, advancing a notion of symbiosis and symbiogenesis¹⁷ for evolutionary variation leading to speciation. According to them, the idea of common descent is a fallacy, and all species are a result of coevolution, including humans, whom they state are “multicomponented beings” who are “composed of many different living parts” (Margulis and Sagan, *Acquiring Genomes* 24).¹⁸ Envisioning changes in evolutionary theory, Deleuze and Guattari argue that evolution occurs only in the symbiotic domain through the assemblage of entities of totally different species, genus and kingdoms which have no filiation (*Thousand Plateaus* 238). Similarly, Donna Haraway has remarked on the entangled way of human existence with other organisms at the level of the genome, where “to be one is always to become with many” (Haraway, *When Species Meet* 4). Although Vonnegut refers to Darwin’s Law of Natural Selection in *Galapagos* to preface the changes in humans over the centuries, his future humans parallel a symbiotic transformation, combining attributes from different species and even orders. This is apparent in the variety of ways critics have described the humans of the far future, from being seal-like (Caracciolo 303; Ferguson 236; Parker- Kreig 120) to dolphin or sea lion-like or even sea chimp-like (Caravan 142-143). These comparisons are also a consequence of the overarching similarities between the humans of the far future and aquatic animals like seals or dolphins, from their average lifespans of thirty years, vying for a common food source, sharing common predators such as sharks and killer whales, to their near-identical physical appearances. But the uncanny

¹⁷Symbiosis is the living together of organisms that are different from each other. Margulis and Sagan remark “Long-term stable symbiosis that leads to evolutionary change is called “symbiogenesis.” (Margulis and Sagan, *Acquiring Genomes* 19-20).

¹⁸See also Margulis and Sagan, *Microcosmos* 190 and Margulis, *Symbiotic Planet* 8-12.

similarities between the future human and such aquatic animals are merely coincidental and not particularly a result of any filiation or kinship. Gilles Deleuze points out that becoming-animal is a flight or escape from established identity and not based on imitation, mimesis, or resemblance where one ends up looking like the animal. Instead becoming-animal is all about entering a zone of indiscernibility from which the human or the animal cannot be extricated (1). In the context of the novel, the likeness of a human to a seal or a dolphin does not involve identification with the animal since the human race is without an endpoint, as can be evidenced by Leon's comment, "I've only been here for a million years- no time at all, really" (235). The future humans do not transform into a specific animal, and their identity is in process, not directed towards the attainment of a final form. In this sense, the movement of becoming is between identities, where humans display a hybridity featuring a unique combination of their powers and that of aquatic animals like seals and dolphins. Vonnegut provides a whole host of powers that define the future human, such as: becoming fully aquatic, having a keen sense of smell like a dog's, possessing soothing tones for comforting the sick, being innocent, peaceful, and relaxed, being able to laugh and hiccup, being efficient at catching fish with their teeth, having no language, toolmaking skills, memories, institutions, artforms or illusions of a supernatural being or phenomenon, being furry and not smart enough to make weapons, and so on. As a consequence of the powers it gains and loses during its transformation, the future human is able to inhabit the limit between the human and animal. The future humans in the novel are boundary-blurring entities that make connections across species, genera, or orders to subvert those patterns of thought which imagine the human as self-enclosed, autonomous, and distinct from animals.

In *Galapagos*, Leon Trout declares that the oversized brains of humans were “fatal defects” (16), which threatened the survival of humans and non-humans alike, and he claims catastrophes as varied as famines and wars were its consequence. Leon Trout, the omnipresent force in the novel who observes humans over a million years, maintains that nature’s intervention in humankind curbed their destructive potential. The human “bodies or personalities” become a resource for “Nature’s experiment”, highlighting a reciprocal relationship where humans not just affect nature but are also affected by it (71). The human subject, rooted in a network of connections with organic and inorganic bodies, is succinctly summarized in an analogy that Leon Trout provides between the humanoids of his father’s science fiction novel and the humans of his million-year lifetime. The humanoids of Kilgore Trout’s science fiction dismiss their “most serious survival problems”, which leads to “all the forests being killed and all the lakes being poisoned by acid rain, and all the groundwater made unpotable by industrial wastes and so on” (71). Affected by the extreme pollution they cause to their environments, the humanoids give birth to “children with wings or antlers or fins, with a hundred eyes, with no eyes, with huge brains, with no brains, and on and on” (71). The children of these humanoids can no longer be said to descend from a common ancestor and, akin to Akiko, are assemblages of organic and inorganic processes. The few children who survive these variations procreate and have “young like themselves” (71), with features unrestricted from species or family lines. In his science fiction, Kilgore Trout surmises that these children could become “better planetary citizens than the humanoids” (71).

In contrast to his science fiction, Kilgore Trout has no hopes for humanity in his real life, and he reminds Leon that humans have sabotaged their survival and wrecked the “once beautiful and nourishing planet” like an all-poisoning and all-consuming

cancer (204). However, with the emergence of furry aquatic humans who are “innocent and relaxed” on an “innocent” planet, Leon sees no reason why the “earthling part of the clockwork can’t go on ticking forever” (151, 16, 234). Only after occupying a liminal state like the humanoids is humanity able to thrive again in Vonnegut’s world. Kilgore Trout’s science fiction, or Leon’s entire narrative, implies the need for humans to find new means of engaging with difference that is not based upon assimilation, appropriation, or instrumentalization of the other. One way of dealing and living with difference, which Galapagos gestures toward, is to reconfigure the identity of humans as partial rather than fixed and based upon its relations with other animals. The human thus becomes an interdependent entity, one among the various animals inhabiting the planet and equally vulnerable to the enigmatic operations of nature.

4.4 Conclusion

Environmentalists believe that we are in the midst of a sixth extinction event caused mainly by human activities destabilizing the ecosystem (Williams 43-45). More animals are disappearing from our worlds than ever before, leading to a renewed interest in their lives. Galapagos loosely resembles an extinction story as it poses the question of what might happen to us and other lifeforms if we continue to live oblivious of our futures. The only hope for humanity is becoming something that is not at odds with the environment. Accordingly, the novel can be viewed as a narrative of metamorphosis which remarkably does not involve the sudden transformation of a human to a non-human animal or vice-versa. In his work on posthuman transformations in literature, Bruce Clarke notes, following Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, “Given deep time, biological evolution is natural metamorphosis” (1). Against the backdrop of Darwin’s natural selection, Vonnegut’s narrative entices us to think about ourselves, not in terms of “being” but through Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of “becoming”, a process

delineating the continuous shifts in human identities, stretching into the infinite. The changes humans undergo to their physical and mental selves over a million years highlight the flexibility of the boundaries between humans and non-humans. Vonnegut intentionally and ironically subverts any attribute that could be considered quintessentially human, further modifying the future humans to parallel non-human animals with flippers, streamlined skulls, and nubbins. The human, as I have detailed in the essay, cannot be separated from the animal, and as Elizabeth Grosz mentions, “the animal surrounds the human at both ends: it is the origin and the end of humanity” (12). The cosmic scale of the novel presents a challenge to our assumed superiority over non-human animals in particular and nature in general, enabling us to recognize that we as humans must view ourselves as “passing guests” rather than “possessive hosts” of the planet (Chakrabarty 23).

Before writing *Galapagos*, Kurt Vonnegut toured the Galapagos archipelago, which made him realize that humans must learn to co-exist with other lifeforms for an ecologically balanced planet. Nevertheless, for Vonnegut, who held a rather pessimistic view of human life bordering on contempt, humans achieving equilibrium with their surroundings seemed a far-fetched utopia. In his interviews, especially during the early 1980’s, he remained vocal about his disdain, stating: “My real feeling is that human beings are too good for life”; “human beings don’t like life”; “life is unpopular here”; “there are not many people who want life to go on” (Allen 269-277). As a response to a mankind that inflicts only misery from wars to large-scale biospheric degradation, Vonnegut, in the novel, conceives of a humanity that is content to spend its days languidly by white beaches, coconut palms, and lagoons. The idea of a peaceful humanity dynamically integrated into nature occurred to Vonnegut upon observing the animals of the Galapagos islands. In an interview on his novel *Galapagos*, he explains:

“Well, if you saw the seals and sea lions on the Galápagos islands, that’s the life you would want. Gee, it’s an incredible, amusing life they have. They play practical jokes on the other animals; they don’t have that much to do. I mean, they’re quite smart, and they’ve got a lot of time on their hands. Sharks are what they have to look out for -- and killer whales” (Allen 304). Vonnegut deems this living a better alternative to the one in which humans commit atrocities against each other and other lifeforms.

However, several scholars have regarded the seal-like future humans of the novel as brainless animals without any of the typically human properties and merely performing base biological functions. In these humanist perspectives, the human is defined in opposition to the animal, premised largely on abstract properties that are absent or lacking in the animal. Vonnegut’s novel rejects such separation based on essence to highlight those points of contact where the human enters a zone of indiscernibility with the animal. Further, by blurring the ontological distinctions between humans and animals through manipulation of scientific concepts, *Galapagos* presciently responds to recent scientific developments that have shown the remarkable similarities we share with animals in terms of cognitive abilities, language capacities, and emotional intelligence. What makes the novel unique is that it does not restrict itself to the dissolution of the human/animal divide and progresses beyond it to imagine connection-making figures that inhabit the limits of this divide. This brings us to the novel’s crux – the question of what relations across seemingly irreducible differences we need to make in these times that can enable our survival and that of other lifeforms. The answers the novel provides are not as straightforward as Vonnegut’s interview, in which he finds the life of a seal as an easy way out of avoiding the unnecessary complexities of civilization. To attain an ecological balance with our surroundings, we must come to terms with our own animality instead of repressing it. The way forward

for humanity is neither a metamorphosis nor a literal transformation into an animal, but finding a means of embracing difference and learning how to live and deal with it. As the novel details, the human needs a radical transformation to bring it “into harmony with itself and the rest of Nature”, but perhaps not at the expense of never writing “Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony” (234, 208).

5. CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

A man in Virginia was charged with conspiracy to create and distribute animal-crushing videos. Michael Macartney, who also goes by the “Torture King,” has described himself as the “King of the demented world” (Gunter and Henschke, “Torture King”). In his kingdom, were made monkey torture videos for monkey torture enthusiasts from all over the world. The Torture King would invite and collect grotesque ideas at a price to finance men in Indonesia who carried out the task of creating customized torture videos. The baby-tailed macaque most often in these videos was set on fire, lacerated, punctured, or pounded with tools of whatever choice the enthusiast demanded, or even put in a blender if the other grisly ideas were not perverted enough. The court charged Macartney with the funding and distribution of videos depicting the “torture, murder, and sexually sadistic mutilation of animals, specifically juvenile and adult monkeys” (Gunter and Henschke, “Torture King”). While the news became the headline of the BBC website, it also raised several interlinked and sometimes contradictory questions. For one, I find videos of the bluefin tuna cutting, decapitation, or butchering mildly amusing and only mildly disturbing in comparison to the inhuman and sickening acts performed on the monkeys. One can find several videos on the internet with millions of views detailing the precise butchering of the fish. The BBC agrees with my perspective, a dominant one thus far, that monkey torture is unacceptable and must be reported. While the Torture King had other animal options, this headline would be sufficient to ignore the other animals suffering similarly. I was wondering why my responses to different animals are so different, such that the lines between killing, torture, deaths, eradication, infestation, tastes, and cuisine become fraught with contradictions. To my

mind, spring slaughterhouses, the shooting (gun and film) of mice in the grain fields, the burning of cats in sixteenth-century Paris as a popular form of entertainment, the declining consumption of dogs in Korea, and so on. Nevertheless, what also flashes through, ironically, are the research papers submitted to prestigious scientific journals by Unit 731 of the Japanese Imperial Army. Unit 731 conducted gruesome experiments much worse or sometimes not that dissimilar from those orchestrated by the Torture King, on the Chinese, ethnic minorities, and prisoners of war. The Unit submitted its research findings, claiming that the experiments were performed on Manchurian monkeys (Hammond). The people affiliated with the Unit were granted immunity, and many enjoyed long and illustrious careers, including becoming the president of the Japan Medical Association, the head of the Japan Olympic Committee, and the Governor of Tokyo (Hammond).

These incidents reveal the complex and often conflicting relations we have with those who are amassed under the heading of the animal. The animal becomes the constitutive outside and inside of humanity. The human can be classified as an animal, as well as being defined in opposition, in relation, and sometimes as the missing link between the two. We can be human, less than human, subhuman, inhuman, antihuman, ahuman, beasts, monsters, wild, and even animals. On the other hand, from ants to elephants, from fishes to snakes, from a platypus to a stingray, every being who is not human can be collapsed into a category that subsumes all differences.

Animals and humans are categories inflected with sociohistorical and cultural determinants and are never natural. Across time, several people have tried to ascertain and establish truly human attributes to dissociate and distance themselves from their animal pasts. However, they have not found anything that can be recognized as the essence of the human. What makes this entire practice of finding properties or essences

futile is that the differences within humanity itself are so vast. What one person may attribute to be the characteristic of humans might be absent in some humans or sometimes in most humans. Jacques Derrida, in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, one of the seminal philosophical works in animal studies, has astutely observed that the search for essences is futile since the “list of “what is proper to man” always forms a configuration, from the first moment” (5). Further, Derrida notes, “For that very reason, it can never be limited to a single trait and it is never closed; structurally speaking it can attract a nonfinite number of other concepts, beginning with the concept of a concept” (5). Never limited to a single trait, unending, and without origin, what is proper to man if limitless cannot be delimited by the animal, and if limited, cannot be transposed onto the animal since it would encompass all lifeforms from time till the end of time.

This thesis has been a practice to find answers, even if it be through the asking of questions, on the matter of the human in relation to the animal. Three interrelated concerns animate this thesis: to understand how boundaries between humans and animals are created, the contemporary implications of these boundaries, and to imagine the consequences of the dissolution of the boundaries. In order to carry out the task, I utilize literary texts in which the animal or animality appears in different guises to demonstrate not just what human or humanity currently is but also why we should start thinking not through radical separations but through partial connections. The animal as a concept has often been employed to suggest a lack, an unfulfillable deprivation, a negative. When humans are linked to animals, their exploitation becomes justifiable; when oppressions of humans are to be hidden, as the Unit 731 example showcased, the animal stands in place of humans, becoming, in both cases, the limit case for humanity. The mechanisms underlying the creation of distinction in relation to and in opposition to animals have been investigated only recently in and through various disciplines. One

way to understand how the human/animal divide is established is the “anthropological machine” (Agamben, *The Open*). The anthropological machine distinguishes the human and the animal through processes of inclusion and exclusion that are based on symbolic and material mechanisms of scientific and philosophical discourses (Calarco, “Jamming the Anthropological Machine” 170). Agamben provides us with two variations of the machine, the modern and the pre-modern. In the past, the difference created between humans and animals was employed to humanize animals, where some people were considered animals in human forms, such as barbarians and slaves. In the modern version, the difference created is employed to animalize humans, to separate from within humanity itself those aspects that are animal in nature. Natural science is utilized to legitimize the differences as essential. Since the modern machine is post-Darwinian, it seeks to isolate and separate the emergence of the bounded human from its animal past. In this manner, the animal aspects can be completely withdrawn from the realm of the human. The anthropological machine is not entirely natural since it cannot delimit what exactly divides us from animals. It is also a social and cultural construct affecting the politics of life. Agamben iterates that man distinguishes himself by dividing within himself those who are human and those who are less than human or animal-like. As Kelly Oliver notes, “The question, then, for Agamben is not one of human rights, but rather how the category of the “human” is produced and maintained against the category of the animal, which functions as both constitutive outside and inside such that some “people” are rendered non- or sub-human” (2). However, the question is not to foreground one concern at the expense of the other. Although the extension of Agamben’s thought allows us not to background animals and animality, the thought in the original is concerned only with humans. Another way of looking at it is why animals are treated or perceived in a way that is inferior or instrumental to

humanity, and also how their cruelty is justified, and in turn, justifies the oppression of various groups of people. The resulting examination is a contestation of anthropocentrism, or human exceptionalism, both inside humanity and outside in relation to non-human animals. This broad conception of anthropocentrism, which Calarco defines as a “set of ideas, structures, and practices aimed at establishing and reproducing the privileged status of those who are deemed to be fully and quintessentially human”, demonstrates how different oppressions share similar logic, and the foregrounding or backgrounding of one oppression over another does not mitigate the logic which creates these oppressions (*Identity Difference Indistinction* 18). In other words, we should always examine oppression holistically, not privileging one at the expense of the other.

Moreover, anthropocentrism is based on establishing and legitimizing anthropological differences or properties that are essentially human. This, as Agamben’s thought also demonstrated, is political and facilitates oppressions inside and outside of humanity. Similarly, philosophers have noted that the differences at present are embedded in dualisms, which construct a radically separated and devalued sphere of otherness (Plumwood, *Feminism and Mastery* 41). This logical structure interlinks the different oppressions and enables us to show their connection. Val Plumwood, in her book *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, argues that the structure of dualisms closely corresponds to classical propositional logic, which has the characteristic structure of otherness and negation. She further notes that this is the logic of modernity, a form of instrumental reason that conceives humanity as disembodied and independent of nature and all elements linked to nature (2-4).

Dualism, or dualistic logic, should not be conceived as difference or dichotomy and should be viewed as a form of logic creating hierarchies through difference. I argue

that the anthropological machine's history is rooted in dualistic logic, which invents distinctions through discourses, practices, and institutions. The key difference between the anthropological machine, as conceptualized by Agamben, and the concept of anthropocentrism is the inclusion of the animal in the circle of ethics, responsibilities, and relations. Anthropocentric logic is dualistic, and when such logic is naturalized, the resulting systems, practices, and institutions become discriminatory. The privileged status of those who are deemed and deem what is essentially human is in itself problematic because it is rooted in spurious reasoning which denies any dependency on the other to imagine the human as independent, autonomous, and radically separate from the inferior realm of nature. Val Plumwood's thought elaborates how anthropocentrism is based in dualistic logic: "concepts of rationality have been corrupted by systems of power into hegemonic forms that establish, naturalize and reinforce privilege. Rationalist dualisms especially justify elite forms of power, not only by mapping the drama of the master subject and his Others onto a dualism of reason and nature, but by mapping many other aspects of life onto many other variants of these basic forms" (*Environmental Culture* 17). Accordingly, the privileged few who recognize themselves as human do so by thinking they are superior to the rest and unconnected from the rest. This occurs due to a flawed logic stipulating that humans are self-governing, sovereign, non-aligned, and autonomous. However, even in reaching this conclusion, the privileged groups mis-recognize the Others.

We need to recognize that the elites are in power due to misrecognition, where their claims to power appear natural and legitimate instead of achieved through domination and initiations of competition. The legitimization of these discourses makes them hegemonic, meaning that their operations are viewed as a part of the natural order of things. Once these structures become internalized, your view of the components on

which your views or thoughts are based is blocked. The prevalent discourses regarding the divide should not be viewed as essential since it is in the interests of the few who, through their privilege, make these attributes seem essential rather than arbitrary. However, the other part of this dualistic relation is often hidden from view, on which is based the naturalizing and essentializing. Following Pierre Bourdieu, this is the misrecognition of the privileged, often understood in terms of class relations. Since the misrecognition of power requires it to be exchanged easily to consolidate and establish it, all legitimizing discourses are based on the symbolic order. The power exercised by the powerful is often symbolic while having innate links to wealth and capital in contemporary times. To exert symbolic dominance over most groups of humans and animals, the privileged group rationalizes abstract attributes and their practical implementations. For instance, language is an abstract attribute, and the language you speak and the way you speak can become a site to place you in a hierarchical order. Similarly, the class you belong to will determine the politics of your life. In this sense, the distance from the privileged, who are misrecognized as natural, will determine your worth, status, esteem, and value. On the other hand, as Beverley Skeggs' works showcased, misrecognition also operates through the essentialization of the other. The systems of power impose fixity on the Other by making their attributes seem as homogenous, natural, and ascribed. The fixing of the Other allows the privileged to be mobile: assimilating, appropriating, and instrumentalizing the values it deems marketable and profitable. The One has the appearance of the natural, and the Other has the ascription of Nature, a fixed state.

The phenomenon of misrecognition calls into being the concept of the proper human with valued attributes, as shown above. However, even accepting the dominant discourse seems logically flawed. One must not think of the deconstruction of dualisms

as a plea by the Other but as an appeal for an all-encompassing fairness. It is, therefore, to be seen as a saving of the self before the saving of another. Even our own systems of thought point toward that direction; for instance, in ecological sciences, existence is not a call to save the Other but to save the One through the Other. It is the struggle to find the collective in the individual and the individual in the collective. One cannot be conceived without the other. For that reason alone, all disciplines of thought, including the ecological sciences mentioned above, point toward the collapse of all systems of present existence with the collapsing of biospheres, the animal(s), or nature. To think that you know all the links, or worse, to think that you have no links, is to impose ignorance on yourself and all discovered and undiscovered variety of lifeforms of earth. It is also to deem possible the end of interpretation, to suggest that nature can be decoded into neat categories like scientific classifications, and to suggest that science and technology not only can decode nature and animals but also can save us through this decoding. It is about man escaping from earth, becoming truly disembodied, and having no value to attribute to the already devalued nature. This is the fiction of science. Misrecognizing things as natural permits one to escape the processes by which something is ascribed. Science and technology also work as a form of misrecognition, appearing as a means to hurtle man toward the true self, as a man who has decoded all.

However, sciences have also been progressive in realizing that thought should not be totalizing and that we are in the midst of a sixth extinction event where the light shines bright on us; we are the stars of the show. Scientists and biologists state:

Humanity has triggered the sixth mass extinction episode since the beginning of the Phanerozoic. The complexity of this extinction crisis is centred on the intersection of two complex adaptive systems: human culture and ecosystem functioning, although the significance of this intersection is not properly appreciated. Human beings are part of biodiversity and elements in a global ecosystem. Civilization, and perhaps even the fate of our species, is utterly

dependent on that ecosystem's proper functioning, which society is increasingly degrading. The crisis seems rooted in three factors. First, relatively few people globally are aware of its existence. Second, most people who are, and even many scientists, assume incorrectly that the problem is primarily one of the disappearance of species, when it is the existential threat of myriad population extinctions. Third, while concerned scientists know there are many individual and collective steps that must be taken to slow population extinction rates, some are not willing to advocate the one fundamental, necessary, 'simple' cure, that is, reducing the scale of the human enterprise. We argue that compassionate shrinkage of the human population by further encouraging lower birth rates while reducing both inequity and aggregate wasteful consumption—that is, an end to growth mania—will be required (Dirzo et al. 1).

The thought explicates the common concern of philosophy and sciences in erasing the current hierarchical differences. The invitation is to see ourselves as part of the other, ecosystem in sciences, and nature in philosophies. To see the other as a part of ourselves is the concern of philosophy since ethics is a matter of attending to the more than one-self. Put simply, ethics does not begin with I, it begins with us. While this may initially seem unattainable from the dominant perspective, it is not since dominance itself is a perspective. Living in dualisms will lead to a life spent trying to achieve various distinctions through repressions. The need is to imagine a life beyond distinctions, in which categorizations and differences are not dualistic. This entails deconstructing power, which misrecognizes the natural and nature, and exposing how the privileged misrecognize and are misrecognized.

In order to carry out this task, the thesis undertook the study of some select novels in which the duality between the human and the animal is remarkably blurred. In all cases, the arguments follow from the premise that the self in modernity is split in a hierarchical fashion. This split enables the attribution of value depending upon the dominant perspective. In other words, the attribution of value depends upon the

privileged few who resort to dualisms to devalue the Other. Such a structure can impact all justice concerns since value attribution is dictated by and dictates the movements of power.

The analysis takes as its focal material the literary texts of the contemporary era and its intersection with the practice of meat consumption. Scholars have noted that the cultural studies standpoint in the arena of human-animal studies is vast and can investigate other elements such as media, performing and visual arts, sites such as museums, zoos, national parks and sanctuaries, events such as festivals, agricultural fairs and practices such as meat eating, factory farming, animal rights activism, pet keeping, experimentation and so on (Potts and Armstrong 8). Considering the scope of the field, it is often necessary to delimit the study on particular topics since historicizing the topics selected is a pursuit that can have no end. Scholars working in any particular dimension can write theses by picking one of the four mentioned focal materials.

In the first chapter, we scrutinized the construction of race, class, and gender through the discourse of meat. In the first section of the chapter, Ruth Ozeki's debut novel is selected to demonstrate how race-based discrimination is connected to the discrimination animals face through their transformation into meat. The animal and the animal's parts one consumes position one in the hierarchical order of the American society. Chitterlings, hog maws, chicken feet typify the lack of access to better cuts of meat for people of poor backgrounds, especially the black community of America. The association of the devalued animal or its parts devalues groups of humans. Coincidentally, this example shows us how the animal's body, even if it be a particular animal such as a pig or a cow, becomes a site for dualisms. What is meat for one is trash for the other. If certain people consume animal parts regarded as discardable, then it is presumed that these parts reflect their societal status. The hegemonic perspective

renders the animal as meat and not meat at the same time. What then becomes meat from the same animal is a complex phenomenon often socio-historically determined.

Further, the chapter addresses how some animals and not others became food sources for all people. In the American scenario, this history was inflected with race relations where indigenous animals and those who consumed them were considered wild. The colonists, who saw themselves as separate from nature, brought over the animals they had domesticated to protect themselves from the pollution of the wild. The animals acted as a bulwark against those who were not properly human. Some of the domesticated animals of the colonists were transformed into meat animals. This transformation imposed upon everyone (indigenous peoples, the poor, all minority ethnicities, and animals) who and what counts as meat. While the ensuing complexity of the transformation is beyond the scope of this conclusion, it would suffice to say that the colonists created separations replicated on the wild/civilized trope, which subsequently was modified into the invasive/native trope, ironically transforming the native (peoples and animals) as wild and subsequently as invasive. The privileged few decided the kind of treatment of all who are seemingly less than human will receive. These decisions, as history and as the novel explicates, are in the interests of the few. As the thesis has elucidated, these interests are also riddled with contradictions and paradoxes that a dualistic logic engenders.

The domesticated animals of modernity are experiments of biology sponsored by capitalism. Put simply, the animal, especially the domesticated animal, is an exemplar of life being reduced to biology and economy. The domesticated animal becomes caught in a neoliberal world that strives to transform all life into a commodity. As Somers and Soldatic have noted, neoliberalism is the “tendency to reduce all endeavors to an economic value with the aim of extracting as much economic value as

possible” (36). It thus becomes a matter of distance from the economic potential for determining who gets reduced without any moral hindrance and in what ways. Ozeki’s novel shows how animal bodies are modified through the latest scientific interventions. The desire is to control every aspect of their life by decoding them as biological/scientific artifacts to be transformed in the name of productivity. Although constantly devalued, the animals become valued as commodities. Those unable to afford or resist such commodification are, in turn, attributed negative value. Consuming the most-priced commodity will confer privilege, and the privileged will primarily decide the most-priced commodity. Accordingly, every resource stands to be commodified, including those that are, at this point, trash. However, since these are not commodities at present, they are articles with the least worth and the least value. It is necessary to contest such perspectives which reduce everything to exchange-value. We need to separate the exchange of an entity from the use of that entity (Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*). It is this aspect that the chapter details are ignored in studies of Ruth Ozeki’s novel. The use-value of animals, in this case, is always beyond the determination of exchange and does not require any economic extraction. As a result, Ozeki’s novel conforms to anthropocentric logic while contesting it. The issue occurs due to the analysis starting with meat. The animal is already absent in the meat, as Carol J. Adams has explained. This absence enables symbolic interpretations premised on animals lacking some essential attribute.

While Ozeki’s novel, as scholars have highlighted, critiques the manipulation of animal bodies and their slaughter in factory farms, it obscures the processes that render such transformations possible. Why some animals and not others become meat is as pertinent as how an animal disappears when becoming meat. Meat is already detached from the individuality and subjectivity of the animal. The chapter thus seeks to remedy

this issue by suggesting that the analysis should begin with animals rather than meat. Such an analysis requires us to understand the processes through which animals are rendered into meat. It does not necessarily require the end of instrumentality, a vegan objective. Instead, it necessitates, as ecologists have regularly detailed and as Donna Haraway has observed, to “remain at risk and in solidarity in instrumental relationships that one does not disavow” (*When Species* 70). Any scrutiny must begin with accepting the complexity and multidimensionality of power, which “encourages a reorientation toward an ethics of mutual avowal, or open and active acknowledgment of connection with other struggles” (Kim 20). Kim further elaborates, “An ethics of avowal is ultimately about constructing a reimagined “we” in resistance to the neoliberal elites waging war against racialized groups, animals, nature, and others” (20). In novels on meat, the animal fades away, thereby limiting the inquiry to the processes of differentiation. The association of meats with certain groups and the resulting devaluation needs to be studied with respect to the original devaluation. One needs to understand the literal and symbolic means that are misrecognized as essential and achieved, as well as the elements that are misrecognized as ascribed and innate. The inquiry thus sought to uncover the issues surrounding the consumption of certain animal parts and the categorization of such consumption as authentic, the transformation of select animals as meat and of others as nutrition (e.g., fish), and the naturalization of such transformations.

The second section is an analysis indicating the complexity of categorizations when one involves a third party, in this case, aliens. These aliens consider themselves humans and categorize humans as animals. This is the short gist of Michel Faber’s novel *Under the Skin*. The construction of a third party, a science-fiction trope, puts all categories in jeopardy, which enables the imagination of novel categories that need not

be dualistic. This novel can be studied in the future as an impossible fiction. Impossible fictions are ones that “transgress the logical laws of non-contradiction (not p and $\sim$ p) and excluded middle (either p or $\sim$ p)” (Ryan 368). This contradiction is revealed in the construction of the aliens as humans, humans as animals, and the animals in the general parlance as similar to aliens. This contradicts the assumption of the fully human, as the less than human is not necessarily linked to the animal but to the human itself. But the way terms operate within the human order mandates that the less than human be linked to animals in some manner, through distance or proximity. As Agamben’s philosophy highlights, the anthropological machine renders the human and those who are properly so through a division within humanity and outside, always in relation to the category of the animal.

Further, anthropocentrism as a concept allows us to explore the relations between different oppressions, while allowing us to not reduce one oppression to another. Oppressions, therefore, are allied but not reducible. *Under the Skin*, as the thesis highlights, is read as a novel that contests the dualisms between animals and humans but ignores the dualisms structuring humanity itself. The points between these two limits need to be examined; otherwise, the struggles of race, class, and gender will become abstract enough not to warrant attention or care and vice-versa. In all cases, anthropocentrism must be contested, but in ways that do not disavow its relations with other struggles. If the category of the animal is dismantled, the category of the human will come under as well. Still, we must look to other forms of discrimination to provide further support for why the category of the human is problematic. The class struggle, therefore, can be related to the concept of anthropocentrism, as the circulating anthropological differences cause the human to emerge. In this context, Calarco has noted, “At issue here is the deepening of analyses and strategies of resistance that render

manifest the interconnected and interlocking systems of power that cut across the human, animal, and more-than-human worlds” (*Beyond the Anthropological* 22).

The methodological imperative in selecting these texts is to deconstruct the animal/human boundary and how this boundary is maintained. As the previous philosophies have delineated, the focal materials for addressing these issues are as vast as the construction of the human itself. Any text, therefore, selected can manifest itself into a thesis if the person doing a close reading retraces his steps into the history and politics of the divide. The cultural contexts in these cases are equally diverse and sometimes reveal standpoints contradicting the dominant logic. This section’s selection of texts, while having meat consumption as its focus, reveals the changes in the Indian context. The challenge beginning with Western parameters comes back home to depict the changes occurring in our country and whether these changes are beneficial or require a radical rethinking of our positionality. In the first section we discussed the physical and symbolic transformations of meat in the Western context and its correlations with different oppressions such as race, class, and gender. One might inquire why these particular texts were selected and not others. Animal Studies is defined by its subject matter- the relations between humans and animals in culture and cultural practices. This distances itself from the natural sciences (as commonly perceived) which wishes to discover the animal as in of itself, thereby, distancing it from the cultural. Animal Studies disputes these divisions, advancing the notion that divisions between nature and culture are never clear, and the practices that create these divisions are often anthropocentric (benefitting the tiny fraction of humanity). The practices of these Elites are misrecognized as necessary and natural. The contests against this tiny fraction of humanity, the properly human, as a result, have inflections and interactions with all forms of oppression emanating from those who hold the power

to maintain these divisions. This misrecognition needs to be uncovered to make visible the neoliberal practices rendered invisible due to the displacement of the meanings to the symbolic realm.

Misrecognition, for Bourdieu, relates to:

the ways ... (that) underlying processes and generating structures of fields are not consciously acknowledged in terms of the social differentiation they perpetuate, often in the name of democracy and equality.... As a translation of *meconnaissance*, however, misrecognition does not quite place the necessary emphasis on how a practice might be made "...invisible through a displacement of understanding and a reconstrual as part of other aspects of the habitus that 'go without saying'" (Mahar et al., 1990, p. 19). Such misrecognition operates in the education system, Bourdieu argues, through an arbitrary curriculum that is "naturalised" so that social classifications are transformed into academic ones. The result is that instead of being experienced for what they are (i.e., partial and technical hierarchies), such social classifications become "total" hierarchies, experienced as if they were grounded in nature'. (Grenfell & James 23–24) (passage qtd. from James 100).

Misrecognition operates in the division of nature and culture, as highlighted above, but also in the practices that emerge due to this division. The practice of meat-eating becomes the focal material for the first chapter to demonstrate the processes maintaining the nature/culture divide and those allied but not inferior to it, such as the human/animal. To scrutinize this division, the thesis utilizes literary texts, which sometimes highlight the misrecognition and other times misrecognize. These texts contest and conform to anthropocentric logic, tethering contradictory worlds together. This happens as a result of the flexibility in the concept of anthropocentrism. Who the tiny elite are and how they maintain their elitism is a contextual question, suggesting links with several different oppressions. The transformation of animals into meat and the texts that represent and contest these transformations became the coherent set of

material in this field as vast as space. Ozeki's novel and Faber's novel are excellent representations of these transformations. Other texts could also be used for the analysis, such as Agustina Bazterrica's excellent Spanish novel, *Tender is the Flesh* (originally published in 2017), set in a dystopian Argentina, or French author Marie Darrieussecq's novel, *Pig Tales: A Novel of Lust and Transformation* (originally published in 1996). However, close reading of these novels, such as the ones in the thesis, could not be included in this study. This would require the socio-historical reading of the spaces and times in which those particular novels are set, even if the overarching themes might have similarities. The other important feature while seeking to explicate the issues was not foregrounding a particular struggle in place of the other. This required the centralization of race, class, and even caste in the study. As Deckha has pointed out, "race and culture in structuring species-based oppression" are not recognized as equally important as gender ("Toward a Postcolonial" 527).

The novels selected for this thesis allowed me to analyze other oppressions, which would be difficult with other similar works. A reason for this is that both works emerge from the margins. Ozeki's novel is an explication of anthropocentric practices and logic, making it a minority voice in environmental politics, and it is also marginal due to its representation of the marginalized. *Under the Skin* is set in an underprivileged part of Scotland and as I argue, represents the marginalized. These texts provide access to study the marginalized and the processes structuring these marginalization. These texts allowed me to study intersecting and interlocking oppressions of race, class, gender, and animals without privileging one over the other. Two other factors also played a role in the selection of the novels: the accessibility of social, historical, and anthropological information pertaining to the issues raised. The thesis, by choosing the practice of meat as the focal material, rooted itself in the contemporary and its

representation in the literary contemporary. This is due to the focus on the industrialization of slaughter, a recent phenomenon with ever-increasing intensity. As stated in the introduction, this thesis is a vision from below that often originates from the limits. Vision from below enables us to see the interests of the powerful and the hierarchical relations inherent in these perspectives (Schneider 105-106). Haraway's vision, a "question of the power to see" (*Situated Knowledges* 192), is similar to Skeggs' notion of the perspective: "technique by which the interests of some people are put into effect" (*Class, Self, Culture* 6). To have a vision from below, or an alternative perspective, as Kim points out in accordance with these thinkers, requires a "multi-optic vision", a vision that does not foreground or background different justice concerns.

While the first chapter focuses on how meat is symbolic and literal, the next chapter highlights, through the Indian context, the changing meanings of meat. The focus is on how the literature from the margins can help us imagine new ways of coexistence. What is interesting to note is not the escape from instrumentality, as highlighted above, but a consideration for fairness. As sciences often argue, meat has been integral to the evolution of the species and the development of the brain. The human as an omnivore is effectively argued in meat sciences due to our dental structures, the shapes of our intestines, and our inability to produce certain amino acids crucial to survival (Pereira and Vincente 586-587). However, what and who counts as meat, what is a balanced diet, what is moderation, and what is necessity are open to interpretation. Science has been unable to delimit these critical questions, and even when it does, contradictory standpoints undermine correct observations. The results of modern-day slaughterhouses and intensive farming and livestock practices are evident, and science has been utilized to integrate and intensify traditional and, at times, sustainable patterns. As the sciences have distinctly demonstrated, animal farming

causes the most biodiversity loss and natural disturbance (Srinivasan 3). The factory farming practices of the West have dispersed to India, replacing older patterns of rearing animals. The Indian livestock industry now stands as the largest in the world, with India leading the dairy and meat production statistics. For these practical, scientific, and political reasons, I shift my analysis to the conceptions of meat in India. The primary concern in this chapter is to find ways to reimagine ourselves as a part of nature's diverse and delicate webs, a part of nature and not apart from it. This requires us to imagine the animal, especially the domesticated farm animal, radically differently and not as a commodity determined by exchange.

The call is for flexibility of thought and to be skeptical of totalizing frameworks that constrict thought patterns. The animal is affected and affects as do humans. What affections are naturalized under what parameters is worth inquiry. In the present, the affections are reduced to economy, in turn distancing, displacing, ignoring, and suppressing other affections that are also present. If an animal becomes meat, it signifies a breakdown of relations of ethics and care since meat in contemporary times is neither biological nor cultural. Studies, as discussed above, show the inherent contradiction in its production. The degradation resulting from the transformation of an animal into a commodity is well-researched, yet no substantial policy and legislative changes seem forthcoming. The pervasiveness of the economic discourse modeled on productivity, profit, and exchange results in the backgrounding of other discourses. The chapter seeks to analyze whether such transformations of the animal can be viewed alternatively.

One aspect that the study of the novel *The Revenge of the Non-Vegetarian* by Upamanyu Chatterjee clarifies is the idea of meat in South Asia and South Asian communities as a luxury. The idea of a luxury, even of a luxurious product, invokes present relations of discrimination. But it also brings to our notice what happens when

this particular luxury is converted into the commonplace and how this conversion is always rooted in hierarchical relations in humanity and outside it. Can we change these power relations? This is a question we must ask in this analysis, and we must also consider whether literature can provide effective measures to counter the dominant discourses surrounding this form of industrialized production and consumption of animals. Meat as a luxury is evident in tradition and science. Science recognizes the energy-demanding processes of transforming an already edible or available crop into an animal-sourced protein. The energy utilized in these transformations is not replaceable and cannot be reduced to monetary profit or loss. This occurs due to ecological sciences cognizing the fact that the affects of a body can be understood only in relation to other bodies and in multiplicity, implying it cannot be completely measured, decoded, or comprehended. It is always beyond the human, making meat a luxury when provided. This is the philosophical dimension of science, which, in its practicality, forgets these dimensions often. In addition, meat is a luxury, as the chapter has elucidated, due to the act of taking a life. Deaths cause meat, and death makes science uncomfortable. For instance, it wishes to clone meat while implying it will make something out of nothing. Human history shows the reverence and fear that death generates, and one can find similar notions in animals that have long inhabited Earth before us (Van Dooren). The idea of sacrifice is premised on the mystery of death and life. The chapter points in that direction through the concept of witnessing. Witnessing involves, “staying put in the face of death only to then constantly move away from our own impotence and toward the other in a relation of intimacy that thins the human skin and thickens relationality” (Dave 444).

Novels set in slaughterhouses or on the transformation of an animal into meat often detail these processes, which, when the reader is made aware of or re-cognizes

after a willed forgetting, becomes affected. This ability to affect and be affected is shared by all life. The affections that are raised need scrutiny because these are embedded in social processes that change how one affects and is affected. Philosophers have utilized various terminologies in different contexts to explicate this connection to others. Relationality is one such conceptual apparatus that puts the human in an intricate and beyond-human web of causes and effects. Anthropocentric logic reduces these relations to within the human scope and understands them to be completely decodable in the interests of the few. This is a compromised understanding of belonging and relationality. As this logic is naturalized, the means of relating become narrower to devalue the other than human. In these circumstances, the act of witnessing suddenly brings into our purview the relations that we have misrecognized. In this particular instance, witnessing is an element associated with the death of an animal. The industrialized slaughter of animals, when witnessed, unnerves one. The deaths remind one that this affect is shared and that vulnerability is common to all. However, relatedness or relationality encompasses life and is not delimited by death. As Radhika Govindrajan describes, evoking connections with similar concepts provided by Donna Haraway, Marilyn Strathern, and Rachel Carlsen, relatedness conceptualizes life as entangled in relation to that of another (3-4). The concept not only reveals the beyond-human aspect of relationships but also contests the dualisms that perpetuate a narrow perspective of nature. The reading of Perumal Murugan, *Poonachi or The Story of a Goat*, highlights the partial but intimate nature of connections when we approach the other with curiosity and not judgement. Some fundamental questions were charted through the analysis, such as when a farm animal is rendered inedible, when does it exceed its status as meat, and what positive encounters we can deduce from the reading of relations outside hegemonic discourses. Moreover, conceiving oneself as always

related to another often involves a language of kinship which describes relations as not reducible to economic exchanges and composed of relationships of love, intimacy, affection, and attachment, thereby exceeding the genealogical and the biological (Govindrajan 5-7). As animals can equally affect humans, human identity undergoes a change that positions it as always related to another.

The last chapter of the thesis expands on relationality by utilizing the concepts of “becoming” (Deleuze and Guattari) and “cyborg/companion species” (Haraway). As Braidotti has explicated, both concepts share two key features: “serious neo-foundational materialism on the one hand and a rigorous theory of relationality on the other” (200). The chapter premises its arguments on these two features to analyze Kurt Vonnegut's novel, *Galapagos*. The relationality between humans and animals goes beyond the discourse of meat to interrogate the “becoming-animal” of the human and the consequences of this. The chapter argues that Vonnegut's characters transgress the human/animal, the machine/human/animal, and the natural/supernatural/divine, the real/artificial, and other such divisions. In doing so, it can be read as a critique of what the human as a stable category represents and enacts. In other words, how does the order word human affects and disregards being affected. The time-scale of the novel destabilizes the denial of affects as well as the concepts of progress, superiority, human-exceptionalism. The origin of the human begins with the animal and the end of the human ends with animal, although the animal does not necessarily end with man or begin with it. Relationality, however, predisposes similarities. The fisher-folk, the future human, Akiko, and Leon Trout are instances of similarities and differences with animals that challenge the current forms of categorization. These are freakish or demonic couplings that the present order does not allow. These points of overlap, material and semiotic, in the characters point toward a life of messy cohabitations and coexistence.

Since, the animal is regarded negatively, becoming-animal or the companion species contests anthropocentrism. The animal transforms as we transform in our responses to the animal. The animal escapes from its reduction to capitalist or anthropocentric functions to show the human elements beyond thought, at the beginning and end of thought. This humility enables an alternative form of thinking and a new form of encounter that will better conceptualize our embeddedness with the rest of life.

Does Vonnegut's novel follow realistic or science fiction premises? This question would require exploring the differences between the science of evolutionary biology and the element of fabulation in science fiction. While the prior works on necessary truths, the literary strand works on contingent truths to unveil dimensions of life as of yet unknown. Whether Vonnegut exposes the drawbacks of science or parodies should not be the only question governing our reading of the novel. One can argue that his novel is futuristic since it draws back the curtain on developing theories of genome and variation, even if partially. These theories suggest that there is more genetic diversity within a population than was previously recognized and that some populations that were thought to be stable repositories of genetic diversity have the greatest diversity. For instance, Tishkoff et al. note that the populations in East Africa were known to have homogenous genotypes (genetic makeup or complete set of genes of an organism or alleles which are variant forms of genes carried by an organism), possess the greatest amount of variation among the populations around the world (1035-1044). These examples set up exciting lines of thought that make one ponder the stability we presume in populations and ourselves.

Deleuze and Guattari's thoughts are against privileged modes of categorizing the world and are not to be read as scientific treatises or references to genetic theory. However, it is against the presupposition of the individual and its replication,

reproduction, and mimesis that constitutes their opposition to Darwin's thoughts. Instead they ask how individuation, or individualising affects, arrange themselves to create individuals. This is also, in part, due to the concept of time they borrow from Bergson. One does not conceive of time linearly in Deleuze and Guattari's thought. Even Haraway's works, such as *Primate Visions*, although not necessarily commenting on philosophical ideas of time, work partly because they delineate time differently for different people. According to Ronald Bogue, "We may say, then, that there is a future of the present as contraction, a future of the past as retention and precondition, and a future of the future as cut, assembly, ordering and seriation. But why raise these issues? When Deleuze speaks of a people to come, he often cites Paul Klee's remark that 'the people are missing', 'c'est le peuple qui manque'. The implication seems clear: in the present there is no people, and the people to come, le peuple à venir, is only possible in some future that has not yet arrived" (79).

The ability to contract the present differs for different organisms, but all of them possess a future that cuts across and is a leading edge of the present. It is the outstripping of the infinite future composed of differences or variations in biological terms (although necessarily unexchangeable) by the embarkment of humanist thoughts and ideals maintained in the name of exchange-value. Claire Colebrook explains it beautifully in her thought-provoking book on who should we kill to save ourselves, "The world that now appears to be threatened has always sought to save itself, either from its non-Western others *or* from its less angelic tendencies. What makes twenty-first-century "end-of-world" culture distinct from centuries of imagined collapse and decay is that saving the world becomes increasingly parochial—saving the world amounts to saving *us*, and the end of the world looks a lot like the affluent West becoming like those others it once sought to save" (*Kill 2*). It is the eternal return of the

same in which the West discovers itself through the possibility of rectification of harms it distributed. The one who can harm is the one who may heal, seems to be the underlying notion. Narratives of saving the world also succumb to the idea of guarding hyper-consumption at the cost of lives. Luxurious consumption of animals, as described in the thesis is one such instance among many. For many critics, the end of world narratives is a location to trace the heroism, the self-revelation, the salvation, and the reconstitution of a universal humanity that begins in areas and times of decadent affluence. The universal man, the individual, and the global citizen are vacant of those who could never really avail those attributes (discursive and non-discursive) to be one. To quote Skeggs and her excellent explanation, “The individualism which is assumed in a great deal of theorizing on subjectivity is the product of, and in the interests of, privileged groups in very specific historical and national circumstances” (*Formations* 162).

Vonnegut’s novel can be read as a subversion of those who save and those who are saved, along with the attributes (material and symbolic) such a saving requires. To repeat, it is a resolution of an indeterminacy in a singular system. Although the chapter on Vonnegut does not specifically address race, gender, or class as the other chapters in the dissertation do, in trying to privilege a mode of thought at the borderlands of what is human/inhuman/animal, the novel is not devoid of such considerations. It is a tale of the famed detritus of humanity having a future rather than the white, western, and linearly progressing man. An American teacher without a job from a town without jobs (mechanization of labor); a Japanese teacher of ikebana losing out all forms of flower arrangement to a robot; the indigenous and homeless tribe of Kankabonos; a female covered with fur due to radioactive fallout; and a schizophrenic man are the main host of characters from which a different human emerges. This is not a case of self-

revelation or the eternal return of sameness but the return of differences. Ideals of humanism collapse as women from this tribe, along with Akiko, become the progenitors of humankind. The people to come erase the ultimate distinctions between human and animal, thereby erasing the means of current living and relating to animals and all others related negatively to this elusive category. The transformation, many critics disavow, reinstates the ideal mind/brain of the human, separating it from the destruction it has caused. This disentangling to create determinate systems results in a communication of privilege where smaller brains are identified with a loss of all that is human, never explaining what it means to be one. Are the variations of the women of the tribe, a Japanese radioactive beneficiary, and a delusional man inherently susceptible that it negates what is human? Biologically, do the individual variations passed on from individual to individual in Darwinian terms eliminate from whom the traits of mindlessness emerge? Replacing God with chance and destiny to argue the elimination of traits amounts to an analytic defeat. Instead, as the chapter argued, the way Vonnegut constructs his novel places all the characters in a working arrangement where they refute the universal human by brokering the breakdown of exchange-value and making immanent within its use-value. The elements in opposition to being, often rendered in inhuman terms, become the flat protagonists of the world. Flat in tones since humanism has never allowed them a voice. The withdrawn tribes representing nature, the animals representing nature, and women representing nature are subverted in the creation of new people to come who are inextricable and indistinct. They cannot be placed in transcendental narratives due to their positioning, which is close to whatever is considered less than human. Something could also be said of the men in the novel, where one sees the universal morality of being a man derail. Madness and its moments envelop men as they fail to hang on to standards. The abstract standards generated to

explain only deficits and investments of finance and commands. However, doing so suggests that the values we hold as necessarily true are contingent and situated. They hide the processes that create the animal as a lack, deprived of what is human. In Deleuze and Guattari's words, "We become animal so that the animal also becomes something else. The agony of a rat or the slaughter of a calf remains present in thought not through pity but as the zone of exchange between man and animal in which something of one passes into the other" (*What Is Philosophy* 109).

NOTES

Benefit from animal research

The scientific discourse has abundant concrete examples of benefits humans gain from animal research. For instance, the JAX mouse, a commercially inbred mouse used in genetics, cancer, and pharmaceutical research, or the Oncomouse, used in breast cancer research, leading Haraway to name it a sister species. From envenomation to disease control to the evolution of diseases and cures, the encounters between us and animals are multiple. It is necessary to select those encounters that are unequal, that cause suffering, and limit or erase the futures of various animals on earth. From a cultural standpoint, uncovering discrepancies in and through animal research will benefit animals, including us.

Difference between animal welfare and animal rights

In general, sciences define animal welfare in three ways: feelings, function, and nature (Huntingford et al. 333-335). Feelings-based definitions are based on subjective mental states and endorse alleviating negative experiences. This form of thinking requires us to translate what is subjective experience and interpret their consciousness and agency.

Function-based definitions depend upon the animal's ability to adapt to biological systems, function within them, and not respond to pressures that it cannot possibly cope with. A biological system, I must emphasize, must not be thought of in terms of stasis, but its relative, dynamism. Biological systems are challenges to stasis. Status quo is a catastrophe for all systems including biological. Nature-based definitions envision animals as expressing their innate nature. Its life and behavior must be decreed by nature and by what is natural. The cosmos becomes a bearer of good, which animal life must conform to, a Greek way of viewing nature. Science uses any of these in tandem or isolation depending upon the questions it wishes to ask. One important element worth

clarifying is that welfare requires alleviating suffering, unpleasant states being commonplace, unavoidable, and necessary. Suffering is a prolonged experience of unpleasant states without any positive compensation.

The complications apparent in welfare discourse do not figure in rights discourses, where the logic of sameness subsumes differences. Furthermore, the transposition of moral rights, or human rights to animals, ignores the differences between and within animals. It creates universal parameters in place of required complex specific solutions. Deckha explains the anthropocentric bent of animal rights, “The sameness logic inherent in many legal quests for equal treatment is objectionable for the differences that it suppresses. Scholars working in various critical orientations (such as queer, feminist, and critical race theories) have discussed how various equality-based campaigns for disadvantaged groups operate according to their own exclusionary premises” (“Vulnerability Discourse” 48).

Moral obligations for pursuing research on animals and animality

Morality is a powerful term with roots in Western theological and Enlightenment paradigms. In these paradigms, morality exists outside the place and status of man and is alienating due to its unachievable and transcending nature. Morality is bequeathed upon the many by those who stand to judge the norms they have created. Morality judges the acts from an external unchanging perspective; as May explains, “Our morality fails to be integrated into our lives; it exists out there, apart from the rest of our existence. If a person is forced to ask about how to act without at the same time seeing the answer to that question as being related to one’s particular life, then one’s relation to morality becomes fissured” (6). To sidestep the modern notions of morality, one must conceive morality in terms of a process or a movement without presupposed goals and ideals. In simpler terms, we must not see in terms of good and evil, but in terms of good

and bad, a working arrangement that works because it breaks down. A flow between elements of indeterminate systems, only to be located and situated. That it flows, proliferates, and becomes is important in this consideration, in place of clear oppositions of what it is, has to be, and should not be.

What might it become would be the only valid question, and the answer would be the proliferation of differences. Buchanan arrows the point, “our ethical duty is to constantly strive to increase our capacity to act” (“Must we eat fish” 83). In such cases, the animal cannot be reduced to biological markers but also to how it affects and is affected by us. New perceptions are created through such encounters, and one reason is to expand ways of encountering. Anna Tsing puts it brilliantly, “Thinking through self-containment and thus the self-interest of individuals (at whatever scale) made it possible to ignore contamination, that is, transformation through encounter. Self-contained individuals are not transformed by encounter” (29). For now, it seems, ironically, that encounters are mediated through its South Asian definition of elimination and violence. We are obliged to change the way we approach the environment, the body, the animal, since domination causes the least amount of affects to traverse and translate between bodies. It becomes even more important, remarkable, and interesting to understand that ecological systems are not thought of in terms of balance but discordant harmony. Once an animal disappears or becomes extinct due to human actions, we lose not just a way of encounter or a way of altered perception, but we also subjugate differences to identity. This prefigures an inseparable realm that distinguishes itself by declaiming its distinction from the other, dismissing how it is entangled with it in its creation. Ecological sciences are quick to point out this entanglement, where the loss of one often leads to multiple losses, or in other words, multiple losses anticipate multiple further losses that are not exchangeable. It is not a tryst with self-revelation through the

difficulty of encounter; rather, it is now to be seen as a quest to have possibilities, even our own. Philosophy and literature cannot be life-diminishing; they have to be life-enhancing and elevate the positive dimension of power that is not predatorial and captured. Strengths build upon strengths.

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