

**INHERIT THE WORLD, DEVOUR THE EARTH**  
**Representations of Western Meat Production and Consumption in**  
**Contemporary Fiction**

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**ABSTRACT**

A quick survey of reality television offerings, news articles, and advertisements are enough to show the ubiquity of meat on the screens and in the diets, homes, and psyches of many Western consumers. However, the animals that are reared, slaughtered, and packaged into meat products, and the industrialized processes that they undergo in order to transform them from animal subjects to consumable objects, are, for the most part, missing from these types of media fodder. In this thesis, I contend that these absent animals, the processes they encounter, and the discourses used in order to perpetuate Western meat production and consumption can be found in three contemporary novels: *Meat* (Joseph D'Lacey 2008), *Cloud Atlas* (David Mitchell 2004), and *Under the Skin* (Michel Faber 2000).

As multi-faceted cultural texts, fictional narratives allow for the exploration of the ambivalent and, at times, contradictory relationship between humans and animals, and the many issues that arise as a result of the majority's choice to consume certain animal species. Fictional works provide readers and audiences with a critical distance, or a means by which the usually invisible can be rendered visible and they thereby provide an avenue for reflection on aspects of daily life that have become entrenched and, consequently, remain unseen and rarely challenged. The continuing prominence of meat in Western diets and the discourses harnessed to reinforce the status quo; our relationship to the nonhuman animals from which this meat derives; the issues surrounding its production on the paddock, in the laboratory, and behind closed doors in the factory farm and slaughterhouse; the effect of meat consumption on interpersonal relationships, human and "animal" health and the environment, and the metaphorical

and symbolic value of meat might be hard to find in mainstream advertisements, prime-time news bulletins, and reality television, but they are not excluded from the fictional narrative arena.

Through their various representations of the human-animal divide, biotechnologies, factory farming and slaughterhouse processes, and their portrayals of anthropophagy, the novels I have selected are a provocative means of bringing to light the speciesist ideologies and discourses that perpetuate industrialized Western meat production and consumption. I contend that these fictional representations can be read as subversive challenges to the meat-centric status quo, and are more informative and interrogative than the smorgasbord of “reality” television and advertisements that prompted my research.

'Fury said to a  
 mouse, That he  
 met in the  
 house,  
 "Let us  
 both go to  
 law: *I* will  
 prosecute  
*you*. – Come,  
 I'll take no  
 denial; We  
 must have a  
 trial: For  
 really this  
 morning I've  
 nothing  
 to do."  
 Said the  
 mouse to the  
 cur, "Such  
 a trial,  
 dear Sir,  
 With  
 no jury  
 or judge,  
 would be  
 wasting  
 our  
 breath."  
 "I'll be  
 judge, I'll  
 be jury "  
 Said  
 cunning  
 old Fury:  
 "I'll  
 try the  
 whole  
 cause,  
 and  
 condemn  
 you  
 to  
 death."

- Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1981 [1865], p.28).

## INTRODUCTION

The very domesticity of flesh eating is what makes it interesting. It is almost invisible in its power, but unthought anthropocentrism is more significant and more powerful than any dominion that has to be constantly defended, and it is for this reason that meat is important.

- Erica Fudge, "Saying Nothing Concerning the Same: On Dominion, Purity, and Meat in Early Modern England" (2004, p.70)

A simple trick from the backyard astronomer: if you are having trouble seeing something, look slightly away from it. The most light-sensitive parts of our eyes (those that we need to see dim objects) are on the edges of the region we normally use for focussing.

- Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals* (2009, p.29)

A selection of recent broadcasts on New Zealand television screens: A bearded man stands at a barbecue while a voiceover pitches the tastiness of New Zealand grown and processed pork; a MasterChef competitor deems chicken to be a "ladies" meat, whilst a vegetarian contestant is ridiculed for her tearful response at having to decapitate a duck; three New Zealand sportswomen dubbed the "Iron Maidens" promote the benefits of regular red meat consumption; famed chef Jamie Oliver enthusiastically demonstrates the recipe for a vegetarian "happy cow" burger; a group of people with

the surname “Chicken” attest to the tastiness of McDonald’s chicken-meat products; a “true blue kiwi” farmer is juxtaposed against fine dining Europeans in an advertisement for “home-grown” lamb, and various news articles depict container-loads of New Zealand meat awaiting customs clearance in China, the European “tainted” horse meat saga, and updates regarding the race to produce in vitro meat in order to win PETA’s million dollar award.<sup>1</sup> Whilst the examples above might constitute a relatively small sample of the visual feast presented to consumers on a daily basis, one thing is, nevertheless, made abundantly clear: meat is ubiquitous in the diets, households, screens, and psyches of the Western majority.

It can be easy to dismiss these representations as trivial pieces of the patchwork fabric of daily television programming, or as background sound amidst the white noise emanating from the various screens that tend to dominate our lives. So pervasive are these images in our environment, it is simply taken for granted that the production and consumption of meat is both “normal” and “natural”. However, these (and other) naturalized elements of “daily life” are also “ideologically imbued proclamations of regnant views on human nature and the social order” (Finkelstein 211) and it is for this reason that they should be considered closely. So-called “normal” or “everyday” behaviours and beliefs “must be questioned” writes anthropologist Nick Fiddes in his landmark text *Meat: A Natural Symbol*, “since what seems natural fact to us [...] is exposed as mere cultural orthodoxy when set against the range of beliefs and practices of other societies and in history...” (1).

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<sup>1</sup> In 2008, PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) offered a one million dollar reward to the first person(s) able to grow commercially viable, laboratory grown chicken meat by 2012. (Bartholet, Jeffrey “Inside the Meat Lab” *Scientific American* 30:6 (2011): p.68)

Scapp and Seitz in *Eating Culture* contend that the act of eating *anything* is particularly significant, due to its embodiment of “dramatic philosophical conundrums” and “the puzzling divisions and linkages between culture and nature as well as those between appearance and reality” (1). Others have also noted that for many Western citizens, the consumption of food has been more than simply a means of gaining physical sustenance and nutrition for some time now. A large proportion of Westerners “devote more time, money and attention to food than is needed to stay alive, or even to stay healthy and active” (Telfer 24). We also have a “strong impulse to do what others around us are doing” (Foer 31) when it comes to food; or, as Fiddes writes, when we eat “we feed not only our appetite but our desire to belong” (34). Therefore, both our eating practices and the ways in which those practices are represented can reveal much about how we interact with - and make sense of - the world we inhabit, and bring issues surrounding taste, culture, class, and ethics (amongst others) to the fore. Food is “packed with social, cultural and symbolic meanings”, suggest geographer David Bell and social scientist Gill Valentine: “every mouthful every meal can tell us something about ourselves, and about our place in the world” (13). In light of the significance of our consumptive habits then, food becomes not only “good to eat” but also “good to think with” (Levi-Strauss 162).<sup>2</sup>

Meat in its various forms may indeed be the most thought-provoking morsel on the Western menu because it exists at the “conjunction” of two important ideals: order and anthropocentrism (Fudge “Saying Nothing” 70). Fiddes contends that, in addition

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<sup>2</sup> In *Totemism*, Levi-Strauss uses these phrases with reference to the roles of certain animal species: “...natural species”, he writes, “are chosen not because they are ‘good to eat’ but because they are ‘good to think with’” (162). By contrast, philosopher Socrates would not have us eat *whilst* thinking; he believed the consumption of food was a “hindrance” to the philosophical endeavour (Plato, “Phaedo” in *The Last Days of Socrates*, p.125).

to the taste and nutritional value afforded to certain kinds of non-human animal flesh by the majority of people, the most important feature of meat is its inherent symbolism as a tangible representation of humanity's dominion over the natural world: "consuming the muscle flesh of other highly evolved animals", he states, "is a potent statement of our supreme power" (2). The incessant consumption of meat is also a means by which our species reinforces the "othering" (De Mello 25) and objectification of certain species: "the animal" is defined as "*always-having-been* a thing" whilst "the human" is viewed as "*never-having-been* a thing" (Rohman 15) (emphasis added).<sup>3</sup> This process of "othering" assists humans in their categorization of certain non-human animal species as "edible" or "inedible" and also enables them to place "animals"<sup>4</sup> into any number of categories according to their relationships with them; or perhaps more accurately, how they wish to utilize or dismiss them - as companion, enemy, worker, product, pest, scientific subject, aesthetic object, and so on.

In light of the symbolic value of meat then, the aforementioned advertisements, snippets of reality television, and news articles become much more significant. They are "crucial parts of the processes in which the norms that govern the relations between humans and other animals are established and sustained" (Linné 19). Issues such as the apparent "natural" and "nutritional" aspects of an omnivorous diet and the particular

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<sup>3</sup> The preparation of meat (as well as the consumption of it) is also relevant here. Western citizens usually cook meat, rather than consume it raw and this practice of "routine and ritual cooking of food" is one way that humans can be distinguished from non-human animals (Fiddes 87). Or, as Fiddes notes "more accurately, in this way we *distinguish ourselves* from other animals" (87) (original emphasis). See also Levi-Strauss's *The Raw and the Cooked* (1970).

<sup>4</sup> I have chosen to present "animal" in scare quotes throughout the text (particularly when it is placed in opposition to humans) in order to accentuate how the term is most commonly used with reference to all non-human animal species; rarely is the term used to refer to humans also, despite our "clear membership in the animal world" (Waldau, 18). I use both "*animal*" and *non-human animal* when referring to non-human species in an attempt to draw attention to the way in which a seemingly simple or "naturalized" term actually embodies the inherent hierarchy that is analysed in this thesis and portrayed in the texts. For a helpful discussion on these terms see Waldau's *Animal Studies: An Introduction* (pp 16-20). I also explain the significance of these terms in Chapter One.

“animals” we can and should eat; the perceived developments and problems concerning meat production (such as the dangers of tainted meat and the role and scope of science); the affirmation of stereotypical gender roles; the notion of locally-grown, better-tasting, “high-class” meat, and the conflicting promotion of fast food products, are all found within these “reality” media and prime-time advertisements. Such issues bring to light the rhetoric at play in the reinforcement of meat in the Western diet, as well as the social and cultural ideologies and anxieties that are harnessed in order to aid in that reinforcement. But just how “real”, informative, and indeed helpful are these media examples then? We are, for the most part, only being presented with one side of the consumer coin – the side that supports the retention of the “omnivorous” status quo. For where are the servings of subversiveness? And where, amongst the plethora of meat-centric images and advertisements for non-human animal flesh, are the “animals” themselves?

In this thesis,<sup>5</sup> I contend that these missing, meat-producing “animals” and the processes by which they are transformed from living subjects to consumable objects can be found in a selection of contemporary novels. As multi-faceted cultural texts, fictional narratives allow for the exploration of the ambivalent and, at times, contradictory relationship between humans and “animals”, and the many issues previously mentioned that arise as a result of the majority’s choice to consume certain “animal” species. I have chosen to analyse closely three contemporary fictional narratives: *Meat* (Joseph D’Lacey 2008), *Cloud Atlas* (David Mitchell 2004), and *Under*

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<sup>5</sup> The title of my thesis “Inherit the World, Devour the Earth” is taken from Theodor Roszak’s *The Memoirs of Elizabeth Frankenstein* (1995) p418. At the end of the novel, Elizabeth imagines a world where Frankenstein’s Creature’s offspring “inherit the world” and “devour the earth”. Quoted in Armstrong, Philip *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity*. London and New York: Routledge, 2008, p181.

*the Skin* (Michel Faber 2000). Whilst there are a vast number of fictions which portray and critique some of the aforementioned issues,<sup>6</sup> contemporary texts have been chosen as the primary focal points with the view that they more closely encapsulate both the prevalent attitudes towards meat production and consumption and current Western production practices.<sup>7</sup>

When conducting an analysis of this kind, the historical context of the human-animal hierarchy must be taken into account. The relationship between humans and non-human animals has always been vexed and complicated because the boundary that separates the two is “neither universally found nor universally agreed upon” (DeMello 25). Theological, scientific, technological, ethical, and philosophical discourses have significantly influenced the fluctuating parameters of “the human” and “the animal” and the supposed dividing line between them. In Foucauldian terms, the creation and employment of discourses is the key way in which knowledge and power are produced – and maintained – through language. Authoritative institutions create particular truths, or “what becomes accepted as common-sense ‘reality’ in a given society” (Glenn 64), and when accepted as “truths”, these discourses reinforce the authority of the institutions which produced them. However, they also provide an opportunity for the production of counter-discourses which push back against the various types of “knowledge” produced by their dominant counterparts. The ways in which certain

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<sup>6</sup> The role and scope of science and the meaning of “humanity” and “animality”, for example, are critiqued in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) and H.G. Wells’ *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896), whilst Upton Sinclair’s 1906 novel *The Jungle* received widespread public attention for its portrayal of the Chicago industrialized slaughterhouse; many subsequent descriptions of slaughterhouse realities were and continue to be influenced by Sinclair’s text.

<sup>7</sup> Other recent publications which deal with some of the themes discussed in this thesis include Margaret Atwood’s “MaddAddam Trilogy” – *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013), Don LePan’s *Animals* (2009), David Agranoff’s *The Vegan Revolution...with Zombies* (2010), Vicki Pardoe’s young adult novel *Cooped Up: A Factory Farm Novel* (2014) and David Duchovney’s *Holy Cow* (2015).

discourses have historically constructed the relationship between humans and other animals requires some discussion here; for it is the combination of these which has “naturalized” the practices of meat production and consumption in the Western world (Joy 29) and their operation is portrayed throughout each of the fictional narratives selected for analysis.

Christian doctrine has played a pivotal role in Western constructions of the non-human animal. Numerous sections of the Bible’s “Abrahamic scriptures” have been cited as evidence that “humans have a special place in God’s drama and [that] animals play a merely auxiliary role” (Bernstein 53). The King James Version of the Book of Genesis, for example, portrays a creator God who endows Adam (on behalf of human kind) with naming rights and “dominion” over the natural world.<sup>8</sup> Despite the contentions of some that Genesis 1 describes a “paradise existence” where there is “no hint of violence between or among different species” (Linzey 126), the predominant interpretation of these passages has been that “lordship” or in fact “ownership” of non-human animals was bestowed upon humans at this time (Hursthouse 60) and that “dominion” justifies the latter’s killing of the former (Linzey 126).

Medieval Christian theology subsequently solidified the notion of human superiority through the “Chain of Being”. Heavily influenced by the “natural hierarchy” within Aristotelian philosophy (Hursthouse 61), the Chain placed “God the Creator” at its pinnacle and situated humans above all other “animals”, whilst concurrently ranking particular “animal” species higher than others (De Mello 47). That humankind should be considered “divine” by virtue of their capacity for rationality and language was another of Aristotle’s assertions (Hursthouse 61) which, in the Christian context,

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<sup>8</sup> See Genesis 1:26 and Genesis 2:19, King James Bible.

translated into the idea that humans alone among organic beings possessed divinely-endowed and eternal souls. These tenets of Christian thought have been regarded as confirmation that humans possess an “inherent value”, whilst non-human animals hold only “instrumental value” (Bernstein 42) – a value that is to be determined and harnessed by their human “masters” as they see fit. Given that the majority of current human/non-human animal relationships may be classed as owner and pet, hunter and prey, or consumer and product, it is apparent that these aspects of Christian doctrine and discourse continue to influence Western attitudes towards non-human animals.

The secular sources for supposed human superiority can be traced through a number of philosophical writings. In a similar vein to Aristotle’s *Poetics* (1895), Descartes’ *Discourse on the Method* (1637) also advocated “rationality” as the criterion for placing humans at the top of the “natural” hierarchy (Bernstein 47,163) and asserted that non-human animals possess an *automatic* rather than *rational* means of responding to their environment; these contentions essentially both “widened” and “reconceived” the gap between humans and non-human animals (Hatfield 407). Such notions continue to find support despite the introduction of Darwinian evolutionary theory in the latter half of the nineteenth century<sup>9</sup> which somewhat undermined the notion of human superiority through its categorization of “the human” as a product of evolution just like any other “animal” species (Fudge *Animal* 19). This intrusion of “animality” into the privileged realm of humanity, together with the displacement of a creator God in light of evolutionary evidence may have disrupted the Christian hierarchy, but it was not enough to dislodge it entirely from the belief systems and ideologies of the populace. In fact, the Victorian “coping mechanism” harnessed to mitigate Darwin’s threat to the

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<sup>9</sup> Darwin’s *The Origin of the Species* was first published in 1859.

privileged place of humanity in the world was an “over-investment in the notion of progress” (Rohman 3), which manifested itself as simply another type of privilege “projected onto racial and gendered taxonomies” (5).

This system of privilege is still evident in the current marginalisation of certain groups of people living in Western societies. The ramifications of this will be discussed in the latter part of this thesis, when I discuss how the authors’ portrayals of cannibalism can be read as representations of the ways in which human bodies are made “consumable” by the Western industrial “meat-machine”. However, it is important to note here that these prevailing discriminatory attitudes demonstrate that the perception, categorization, and treatment of non-human animals are inextricably intertwined with the ways in which humans define and interact with those labelled as the societal or cultural “Other”.

The scientific realm also operates within a hierarchical framework, and it is perhaps here where the relationship between humans and non-human animals becomes the most conflicted and contradictory. Despite scientific evidence which suggests that a large number of “animal” species are capable of exercising “rationality” and complex communication (De Mello 45) and despite the existence of taxonomical similarities between human and non-human animals (particularly primates) that have been acknowledged since the arrival of Darwinian evolutionary theory, “animals” continue to be used as sacrificial experimental fodder, thereby reinforcing rather than closing the gap between the two. “At a time when Western science is revealing an increasing number of aspects of commonality between humans and animals” writes Barbara Noske, “we nevertheless tend to define ourselves as distinctly non-animal” (40), for it is only by supporting a constant boundary between the human and non-

human animal, that a permanent gap may be maintained between “*subject* (the free acting human agent) and *object* (the passive acted-upon thing)” (40). Fiddes notes that the theological hierarchy which supports the assumption that “all material things exist for the sake of humans” is in fact “vital” to both scientific and industrial notions of progress (53) and he links the two further by suggesting that the Chain of Being has been “scientifically reformulated” as the modern day “Food Chain” (63). It now seems capitalist forces have done their own reformulating: in my view, remnants of this scientific food chain can be found in the present day “Food Pyramid” and its advertorial sidekicks which incessantly promote the requirement of “animal” flesh in “healthy” “balanced” diets of the Western consumer.<sup>10</sup>

Also in operation is what Benton and Short describe as a “technological metadiscourse” (2). Influenced by colonial discourses, the growth of capitalism (Glenn 66) and the assumption that nature must be improved or controlled to facilitate progress (Benton and Short 3), this discourse constructs nature as a resource for human purposes and continues to influence other discourses currently in operation (Glenn 66). Threads of this “nature as commodity” discourse can be identified in the rhetoric used to promote various capitalist and scientific enterprises. It is this technological metadiscourse which, according to Glenn, “set the stage” for the industrialization of agricultural enterprise and “promoted the discursive practices of contemporary factory farms” (66). This operation of this discourse is also evident in a wide range of human-animal interactions, from scientific research to the use of captive “animals” as live entertainment.

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<sup>10</sup> Other non-human animal products such as eggs and dairy products are also promoted in these ways.

Combined, these epistemologies and discourses illustrate that the boundary between “the human” and “the animal” constantly shifts according to the human use of nonhuman animal bodies. Whilst meat production and consumption require a marked difference and distance between “human” and “animal”, other ways in which “animals” are used, as test subjects for scientific and commercial research, for example, call for the recognition of certain similarities between the two. Cultural geographers Elder, Wolch and Emel note that whilst the human-animal divide may be “universally understood in literal terms”, it is in fact a moving “metaphorical” divide that is influenced by “human-animal interaction patterns, ideas about hierarchies of living things, and the symbolic roles played by specific animals in society” (184).

Whilst the influences on this fluctuating boundary between humans and other animals may be traced through philosophical, scientific, theological, technological, and capitalist discourses, an over-arching definition of the deep-seated hierarchy that exists between the two is a little harder to pin down. The term “anthropocentrism” is synonymous with the notion of human superiority over non-human animals, but it may also simply refer to “the human perspective” - an interpretation which need not necessarily lead to a hierarchical distinction. Prior to any assessment of how humanity relates to the “animal other”, it must be acknowledged that humans operate within an inherently anthropocentric framework, where “we overlay cosmology with ideology at every step” (Boddice 7). Once this truism is accepted, historian Rob Boddice contends, “...anthropocentrism might be emptied of its overtones of dominion, while retaining something of the exceptional. This is to distinguish the *anthropocentrist* from the *anthropocentric*, the former being a political orientation, the latter being an ontological condition” (7) (emphasis added). “Speciesism” then, may well be a more appropriate

term for the prevalent ideological attitude towards non-human animals. Coined in the 1970s by psychologist Richard Dyer and made popular by philosopher and bioethics expert Peter Singer in his landmark publication *Animal Liberation* (1975), the word is an “endorsement” of actions or beliefs which regard humans as “the only creaturely bearers of value, or as creatures whose value as humans systematically trumps the value of all other creatures” (Milligan 226); such a position is clearly evident within the arena of Western meat production and consumption.

However, general ideological definitions aside, what is perhaps most significant here is that the predominant belief system which legitimizes meat consumption, has, until recently, had no name at all. “A phenomenon’s very pervasiveness can obscure our vision of it” writes philosophy scholar Mark Bernstein. “Their ubiquity absorbs any impetus to explain them, or stand in awe of them, or perhaps to be outraged by them” (1). For this reason, social psychologist Melanie Joy has dubbed the belief system that considers eating certain animals both ethical and appropriate, “carnism” (29); this “naming” is an attempt to make visible, a practice which has largely been rendered *invisible* by the authoritative, popular, and “every-day” discourses which naturalise and legitimise its existence. In her words: “... ‘omnivore’ is a term that describes one’s biological constitution, not one’s philosophical choice. Carnists eat meat not because they need to, but because they choose to, and choices always stem from beliefs” (30). In addition to the naming of hidden discourses and practices, fictional narratives, and the analysis of those narratives, are also an effective means by which these naturalised discourses can be brought back into the consumers’ lines of sight. The authors’ defamiliarizing representations of these objectifying and often euphemistic discourses, provide the basis for analysis throughout my thesis.

Proof of the strong hold that the carnist ideology has over the majority of Western consumers can be found in the sheer volume of meat that is produced and consumed each year. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, US citizens consume, on average, 125kg of meat per person per year; those residing in Australia and the United Kingdom consume 110kg and 80kg respectively.<sup>11</sup> This translates to the slaughter of an immense number of “animals” – over 9.1 billion in 2013 in the United States alone<sup>12</sup> and over 150 billion worldwide each year.<sup>13</sup> And this is why, for the most part, the “animal” itself must remain “absent” from the daily lives of consumers (Adams *The Sexual Politics of Meat* 66); its presence and the process undertaken to get it from the paddock – or crate – to the plate must largely be left out of the types of media earlier discussed. For to represent or indeed *re-present* the animals used for consumption to the Western audience in such a way as to illuminate the ideologies, practices, and discourses at work in their world, would be to initiate an interrogation of the hierarchical or “speciesist” status quo, or, at the very least, prompt more widespread discussion about the place and treatment of non-human animals in Western societies.

This is not to say that opposing ideologies such as veganism, environmentalism, and the “animal” welfare movement have been ineffectual. The counter-discourses at work in these movements combined with various high-profile meat-related scandals<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See <http://geocurrents.info/cultural-geography/culinary-geography/global-geography-of-meat-and-fish-consumption>

<sup>12</sup> See [http://www.humanesociety.org/news/resources/research/stats\\_slaughter\\_totals.html](http://www.humanesociety.org/news/resources/research/stats_slaughter_totals.html)

<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.adaptt.org/killcounter.html>

<sup>14</sup> Such as the BSE (Bovine spongiform encephalopathy or “mad cow disease”) crisis in the United Kingdom in the 1990s (see [http://mad-cow.org/~tom/vet\\_interview.html](http://mad-cow.org/~tom/vet_interview.html)), the European horse meat saga of 2013 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-21457188>), and the growing concerns about beef containing harmful pesticides, heavy metals, and dangerous bacteria in the United States (see <http://www.montpirg.org/media/rip/usa-today-growing-concern-over-marketing-tainted-beef>)

have led to an increase in the transparency and visibility of food production (Linné 20); exposés on factory farm conditions and advertisements for “animal” welfare campaigns are also occasionally evident on Western television screens and manage to infiltrate social media. There has also been a recent trend to re-introduce consumers to their meat within carnism itself, by what has been described as the “New Carnivore movement” (Parry *Visibility of Slaughter* 4). A growing number of television shows and publications champion “free-range” farms and the backyard rearing of “animals” destined for the plate, and acknowledge (and sometimes show in graphic detail) the slaughtering process (Linné 20). However, these depictions of “free-range” or “happy meat” are vastly different to the experience of the factory farmed “animals” slaughtered in industrial abattoirs, and it is the products of these two facets of Western meat production which continue to dominate the marketplace; the “New Carnivore” movement does little to address these issues (Parry *Visibility of Slaughter* 4). “Rather than demanding better conditions for farmed animals,” writes human-animal studies scholar Jovian Parry, “the New Carnivore project all too frequently simply fetishizes and commodifies a sense of ‘reverence’ for the animal-that-meat-once-was” (148). Despite the existence of these *re*-presentations, the realities of life and death for the billions of “animals” raised in confined operations and killed in industrial slaughterhouses continue to be largely hidden from the general public. It is for this reason that I choose to reiterate Carol Adams’ “absent referent” theory (*The Sexual Politics of Meat* 66) and suggest that these hidden “animals” and their experiences within the Western meat industry are more easily found in various fictional narratives.

The epigraph to this discussion - Lewis Carroll’s “The Mouse’s Tale” from *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) - is an obvious departure from the types of “reality”

media and advertisements mentioned earlier. Carroll's infamous poem is, *prima facie*, a playful visual and linguistic game of "cat and mouse". Bored feline Fury proposes to conduct an iniquitous trial that will inevitably result in the demise of a protesting mouse whose tail and tale is laid out for the reader in sing-song fashion. This, it seems, is merely a comical representation of an age-old rivalry: the meeting of hunter and prey. And yet, if we have learned anything from Alice's adventures, it is that looks can be deceiving and things are not always as they seem. In the context of a fantastical world where anthropomorphized "animals" converse freely between species, where nonsensical rhyme rules, and where humans are constantly depicted as dim-witted, confounded, or deranged, this small example of emblematic verse becomes something more than a mere light-hearted refrain. Carroll's portrayal of "cat and mouse", might just as easily be seen as a game of "human and animal"; for it is not only Western judicial language that has been placed in the minds and mouths of Fury and "mouse", but Western citizens themselves perform the roles of judge, jury, executioner, and subsequently, consumer – at times simultaneously – in their relationships with the "animal other". The kinks in this tale still permeate Western culture and can be found in the ideology at work in the promulgation of meat consumption some 148 years after their first appearance on the page. Carroll's playful poem is an apt example of how fictional and fantastical narratives might be harnessed to elucidate real-world ideologies and how such depictions of "the animal" inevitably confront and interrogate the notion of "the human".<sup>15</sup> "The animal" writes art historian Steve Baker in *Picturing the Beast*, is "frequently conceived as the archetypal cultural 'other'" and plays a "potent and vital role in the symbolic construction of human identity" in various contemporary

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<sup>15</sup> Both philosopher Jacques Derrida and sociologist Nick Fiddes invoke Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in their discussions of human-animal relations and attitudes to meat respectively. See Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (pp.7-9) and Fiddes' *Meat: A Natural Symbol* (p. 135).

instances (ix). Thus, as science historians Lorraine Daston and Greg Mitman observe: “when humans imagine animals, we necessarily reimagine ourselves” (6).

Fictional works such as these provide readers and audiences with critical distance, or a means by which they may look “askance” in order to make the invisible, visible (Foer 29), thereby providing an avenue for reflection on aspects of daily life that have become entrenched and, consequently, remain unseen and rarely challenged. The continuing prominence of meat in Western diets and the discourses harnessed to reinforce the status quo; our relationship to the nonhuman animals from which this meat derives; the issues surrounding its production in the paddock, in the laboratory, and behind closed doors in the factory farm and slaughterhouse; the effect of meat consumption on interpersonal relationships, human and “animal” health and the environment, and the metaphorical and symbolic value of meat might be hard to find in mainstream advertisements, prime-time news bulletins and reality television, but they are not excluded from the realm of the fictional narrative.

*Meat*, the most recent publication in my selection, is an unsettling narrative. Author Joseph D’Lacey wanted to write “something so grim and disturbing it would ‘stick’ with readers” and in educating himself about meat “it became clear that the book would have a dimension beyond simple horror – it was going to provoke people” (“Free from Harm” 1). Set in the fictional, post-apocalyptic town of Abyrne, D’Lacey’s bleak and ravaged dystopian settlement is surrounded by an ominous wasteland. The town is also firmly held in the grips of both a cannibalistic religion and a ruthless business mogul who profits from the farming of animalized humans referred to as “The Chosen”. Touted as an “eco-horror” (Wilson 1) and a “gruesome” story with a message (Nelder 1), D’Lacey’s depiction of protagonist Rick “Ice-Pick” Shanti’s experience as a slaughterman

revered for his pace and efficiency in killing The Chosen, and the rise of a counter-faith which disrupts the incessant processing line, illuminates many of the forces at work within the realm of Western meat production. D'Lacey's portrayal of the denial of "animal" subjectivity and the realities of the slaughterhouse process are particularly potent.

*Cloud Atlas* also contains a cannibalistic dystopian future environment – one in which genetically modified human clones or "fabricants" are "grown" to serve and work in a totalitarian state. Parts five and seven of David Mitchell's set of "nested narratives" are based on the experiences of Sonmi~451 – a "fabricant" working in a fast food restaurant who discovers that her genetically engineered counterparts are not released after serving their time as workers as they are led to believe; they are instead killed in order to be recycled and used for meat or the production of more fabricants. Sonmi~451's experiences as an employee at Papa Song's restaurant and her transformation from compliant automaton to rebellious subject, provides an avenue for the critique of consumptive practices, genetic modification, and the indifferent consumer. Notions of cannibalism and conflicting representations of "the human" and "the animal" are also woven into other sections of the narrative, which span vast periods of time and place. In this way, Mitchell emphasises the incessant repetition of history and interrogates the definition of "humanity", what it means to be "civilized", and what the ramifications of the endless pursuit of "progress" might be.

Michel Faber's *Under the Skin*, a "satire on factory farming, where humanity constitutes the animal" (Punter 13) also depicts the experiences of a food industry employee, though in this case the protagonist, Isserley, is not a clone or a service worker, but a surgically created human-alien hybrid, and hunter of Scottish hitchhikers.

The narrative initially follows Isserley's "hunting" process and the uneasy conversations between herself and her targets, and then slowly reveals the fate of her captives: stripped of their tongues, hair, and genitalia, they are held underground in factory farm-like conditions before being processed for meat and transported back to the tables of the wealthy in Isserley's home land. Isserley's own metamorphosis is also prominent in the novel – the corporeal transformation she undergoes in order to blend in to the "vodsel" (human) world is a constant source of both physical and emotional pain; her attempts to "fit in" and her perception of the species she hunts, are a provocative means by which the definition of "human" may be interrogated. Isserley's experience and her brief relationship with Amliss Vess (a "vegetarian" member of her own species, reluctant heir to the processing facility, and animal rights proponent) also illuminates some of the realities experienced by the "disposable bodies" hidden behind slaughterhouse doors.

Chapter One of my analysis, "Can I Take Your Order? Deconstructing the Species Hierarchy" is focussed on the issues surrounding the definitions of and distinction between "human" and "animal", with a particular focus on the ways in which my selected texts criticize the notion that linguistic ability grants humans superiority over other animal species. The power of discourses to objectify non-human animals and naturalise meat production and consumption is also discussed; Foucault's work in the realm of discourse, knowledge, and power provides the foundation for critical analysis in this section. In the final part of Chapter One, I discuss how these authors' use of zoomorphic imagery and the motif of metamorphosis also disrupt the species hierarchy by presenting the human-animal boundary as a site of continuous transgression, rather than a fixed and impenetrable divide.

In Chapter Two “Animal Meat Machines and the Means to their End: Biotechnology, Factory Farming, and Industrialized Slaughter”, I consider the ways in which various aspects of meat production and processing are presented and critiqued in each of the texts, with reference to the portrayal of biotechnologies (genetic modification and cloning in particular), factory farms or CAFOs (confined animal feeding operations), and the slaughterhouse process. Both the consequences of these facets of industrial meat production and the language employed to naturalize and euphemize their operation are critiqued in the texts.

The final chapter of my thesis “The Ultimate Me(a)taphor: Cannibalism and the Consumable ‘Other’” is an analysis of the authors’ depiction of cannibalism in the texts, and how the use of the metaphoric cannibal may be an effective avenue for the critique of meat consumption, and consumptive practices generally. I trace the designation of the cannibal as the ultimate “other” and analyse the ways in which the texts subvert this notion by making cannibalism “the norm”, thereby transgressing the boundaries between “us” and “them”, “Western” and “other”, “human” and “animal”, and interrogating what it means to be “civilized”. I then consider the “consumption” of other human bodies in a less literal sense; specifically, how human bodies become “consumable” objects to those in positions of power - particularly within the realm of industrial meat production.

I conclude my analysis with a brief summary of the aforementioned arguments. I then situate these arguments and the possible ramifications of the issues raised within the wider framework of human-animal studies. Finally, I return to my initial proposition concerning the role of the fictional narrative in destabilising the ideological status quo: that texts such as these are a provocative means of bringing to light the

speciesist ideologies and discourses that perpetuate meat production and consumption in the West, and are far more informative and interrogative than the smorgasbord of “reality” television and advertisements that prompted my research.

**CHAPTER ONE:****Can I Take Your Order?****Deconstructing and Destabilising the Species Hierarchy**

The creatures that occupy our taxonomies are never purely nonhuman [...]. Their bodies, habits and habitats are shaped by human designs; they are contaminated by, but also resistant to, our philosophies, theologies, representations, interests, intentions [...] and, just as surely, our concepts and practices are never purely human in the first place. For we are not free of the animals either...

- Simmons and Armstrong, *Knowing Animals* (2007, p.2)

'I have, doubtless, excited your curiosity [...]; but you are too considerate to make enquiries.'

'Certainly; it would indeed be very impertinent and inhuman in me to trouble you with any inquisitiveness of mine.'

- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1994 [1818] p. 27)

Prior to peering inside the confines of factory farms and laboratories, and before embarking on a tour of the slaughterhouse floor, the definitions of - and border between - "the human" and "the animal" must first be considered, for it is here that the

foundations of Western meat production and consumption rest. D'Lacey's cannibalistic dystopia, Faber's portrayal of an alien-operated human slaughterhouse, and Mitchell's transgressive series of narratives, all challenge the strength of this supposed dividing line whilst also exposing some of the adverse consequences "animals" and humans face as a result of this division.

The acceptance and popularity of meat consumption is dependent upon the clear parameters of the terms "human" and "animal"; so too, of course, is the industry which profits from supplying that flesh to Western consumers. "Dominion cannot persist comfortably [...] with the recognition of sameness", writes Erica Fudge (*Animal* 21); for this reason, and in the context of meat production and consumption specifically, "sameness" must be actively denied, and difference must be protected. An interrogation of the species hierarchy then, and the power claimed by humans by virtue of this hierarchy, must begin with an examination of the ways in which the boundaries between the two categories are constructed and defended.

As I outlined in my Introduction, the common usage and understanding of the terms "human" and "animal" embody the hierarchical relationship that facilitates Western meat production and consumption. The use of the word "animal" to refer to all non-human animal species, despite our own membership of that category, assists in the creation of an "artificial boundary" between human and non-human animals (De Mello 16) and turns the relationship away from the biologically inclusive "we", towards the divisive "us" and "them".<sup>16</sup> For French philosopher Jacques Derrida, "animal is a word

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<sup>16</sup> This is also a particularly modern way of conceptualizing these terms. Brigette Resl notes: "In many medieval texts, *animal* was used in its strictest Latin sense to refer to all breathing, moving, living beings, that is, to human and nonhuman animals alike". ("Introduction: Animals in Culture, ca. 1000-ca. 1400". In *A Cultural History of Animals in the Medieval Age*. p. 3).

[...], an appellation that men have instituted, a name they have given themselves the right and authority to give to the living other” (23).<sup>17</sup> Due, in part, to this convenient simplification, “human” and “animal” has come to be regarded as one of the many binary pairings commonly invoked to categorise aspects of the world in which we live. These binaries, which include human/animal, cultural/natural, rational/irrational, mind/body, reason/emotion, and male/female, still dominate our “intellectual and practical landscapes” (Bernstein 163-164).<sup>18</sup> Dualisms such as these are not simply oppositional – “either this *or* that” – but hierarchical too – “this *over* that” (Adams *The Pornography of Meat* 40) (original emphasis). Thus, in the “post-Cartesian West with its continuing appetite for the dualistic and oppositional,” the term “animals” seems to “invariably figure as the negative term” when used in binary opposition; they usually inhabit the role of “the Other, the Beast, the Brute” (Steve Baker *Picturing the Beast* 116).<sup>19</sup>

This hierarchical and ideologically embedded method of categorisation then, aids in the human ambition to define ourselves as that which is “*not* animal” and to consequently maintain a hierarchy of species which permits humans to use “animals” as they see fit (De Mello 15-16). It also exemplifies the important role played by language in the preservation of this (and many other) hierarchical relationships that exist within Western societies. In the same way that the *physical* separation between the human consumer and the objectified “animal” aids in the perpetuation of Western carnism (a suggestion which I will consider and discuss in depth in Part Two of this thesis), the

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<sup>17</sup> For Derrida’s discussion of the term “animal” and its implications, see *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (pp.29-34.)

<sup>18</sup> Bernstein also points out that these hierarchical dualisms were initiated by Aristotle some 2,400 years ago (*Without a Tear*, pp.163-164).

<sup>19</sup> Baker also notes: “...the occasions on which they [“animals”] serve a more positive metaphoric role [...] are generally ones which cannot be cast so readily into binary terms” (*Picturing the Beast*, p. 83).

*linguistic* separation between the two parties also serves to uphold the current meat-centric status quo. The way in which hierarchical models of thought invariably privilege the group constructing the hierarchy (Baker *Picturing the Beast* 92) and the fact that “hierarchical social and political systems have consistently been valorised in the most orthodox forms of Western thinking” (Root 155), have helped to entrench the human-animal divide and its accompanying species hierarchy into Western ideologies. This, in turn, has contributed to the naturalization of Western meat production and consumption. In various ways, D’Lacey, Faber, and Mitchell draw our attention to the existence of the species hierarchy, and powerfully represent the ways in which this is constructed and supported.

The definition of language and the power of particular discourses are rendered visible throughout each of the narratives through the process of defamiliarization. Familiar words, images, “truths” and “ways of talking” are presented in unfamiliar ways and this invites the reader to consider the familiar object, image, or concept more closely. Defamiliarization through artistic mediums (a process coined by Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky),<sup>20</sup> is a response to how our “normal perceptions become habitual [...] automatic and unconscious” (Habib 198); the unfamiliar and often disturbing representations of various discourses are thus an effective means of critiquing the ways in which they have become “normalized” and left to operate without interrogation.

First, the notion that humans may claim superiority over “animals” by virtue of their linguistic ability is challenged. The novels draw attention to the ways in which

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<sup>20</sup> Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky introduced the term “defamiliarization” (one of the “central concepts of Russian Formalism”) in his essay “Art as Technique” (1917). See Habib *Literary Criticism from Plato to the Present* p.198.

“meaningful communication” and (consequently) subjectivity are actively denied to nonhuman animals despite evidence to the contrary. In this way, the texts demonstrate that the maintenance of the distinction between the human and the “animal” requires much human effort, and that the divide is not as simple or as “natural” as might be believed. The narratives also illustrate how authoritative, every-day, and popular discourses continually denote the “animal” as an object, rather than a subject worthy of moral or ethical consideration. In addition, the portrayal of hybrid characters and the use of transgressive imagery also draws the reader’s attention to the tenuousness of the human/animal divide. Metamorphosed or transformed “humanimal” bodies and zoomorphic imagery disrupt the dividing line between “human” and “animal”, and “subject” and “object”, and destabilise the species hierarchy that relies on those divisions. Together, these representations illustrate that the dividing line between “human” and “animal” is not as clear, obvious, or “natural” as might be believed. It is instead shown to be a construct with various linguistic supports that need to be continually defended or remodelled. If a fixed hierarchical system is indeed linked to the production of “infinite, destructive desire” as Nietzsche contended (Root 11), then illuminating those hierarchies, “denying” their legitimacy, or “redrawing their boundaries” might well curb the desire for dominion whilst removing the “putative warrant [...] that confers legitimacy to a particular group’s oppression” (Bernstein 164). Through their respective representations of the hierarchy at work in Western meat production and consumption, the authors invite the reader to re-evaluate the relationship between owner and property, subject and object, and ultimately, the consumer and the consumed.

**Speak No Evil: The Privileged Word and the Denial of Animal Subjectivity**

We remain doubtful that animals could be said to have a language. In part, this doubt is a mere device of philosophy: it is not that we have discovered them to lack a language but rather that we define, and redefine, what language is by discovering what beasts do not have. If they should turn out to have the very thing we have hitherto supposed language to be, we will simply conclude that language is something else again.

- Stephen Clark, *The Moral Status of Animals* (1997, p.96)

She was indispensable. The word troubled her, though. *Indispensable*. It was a word people tended to resort to when dispensability was in the air.

- Michel Faber, *Under the Skin* (2000, p.71)

Linguists, anthropologists, biological scientists, and philosophers have long concerned themselves with the ways in which “symbolic language” may be considered the “defining difference” between humans and nonhuman animals (De Mello 165) by virtue of its association with consciousness, reason, and subjectivity. “From Aristotle to the present day” writes moral philosopher Rosalind Hursthouse, “the faculty of reason and the faculty of discourse have been viewed as inseparable, part of the same package which draws a hard and fast line between us and all the other animals” (71). This notion is embedded in the language of Aristotelean philosophy: the meaning of the

ancient Greek word “logos” not only encompasses ‘reason’ but also ‘word’, ‘discourse’, and ‘saying’ (61).

Cartesian writings echo the intertwining of these concepts. The influential French philosopher believed only humans could arrange words, sounds, or signs together in order to share their thoughts and that similarities between the organs of humans and some non-human animal species were proof of this fact – for if “animals” had rationality or awareness they could employ those organs as humans did in order to make themselves understood (Carriero and Broughton 407). Descartes believed linguistic ability was a sign of both consciousness and “inherent value” in humans only; a conclusion which has exhibited staying power in the many years since its inception.

Twentieth century philosopher Martin Heidegger also deemed language to be “central to the capacity to know, understand, and rationally interact with the world” (De Mello 39), and stipulated that humans alone possessed the ability to utilise language in this manner. Other philosophers such as Jacques Lacan, Immanuel Kant, and Emmanuel Levinas took a similar stance on the question of “animal” language. According to Jacques Derrida (in his own discussion of the human-animal divide, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2009)), they all support the notion that “...the animal is deprived of language. Or more precisely unable to respond, [...] with a response that could be precisely and rigorously distinguished from a reaction” (32). Although many scholars acknowledge the “complex systems of communication of many animals”, writes De Mello, many still believe that “only humans” are thought to have language with qualities such as “multimedia potential, cultural transmission, arbitrariness, creativity, and displacement: the ability to talk about objects or events that are remote in time and space” (366).

However, De Mello also points out that studies conducted in the field of “animal” language are continually challenging these ideas.<sup>21</sup> German border collie Rico, for example, in a study led by evolutionary anthropologist Julia Fischer, was found to be capable of identifying and responding to over 200 words, and had the ability to “fast map” – that is, he could learn new words using the process of elimination (Kaminski et al. 1682). Koko the gorilla’s use of sign language to communicate is well known; she “often demonstrates creativity by developing new signs to communicate new thoughts” (De Mello 368) and she is also capable of using sign language to lie.<sup>22</sup> Irene Pepperberg’s work with Alex the African Grey parrot is another famous research case; Alex could comprehend over a hundred words, and could identify objects by colour, quantity, shape, and texture; he could also communicate his thoughts and feelings in English (367).

“Out of all of the research done in recent years to assess and describe the intellectual and emotional capabilities of nonhuman animals” writes De Mello, “animal language research has perhaps the most wide-ranging implications” (369). If humans were to acknowledge the ability of “animals” to communicate how they feel, it might well be more difficult to view them as mere objects and “force us to re-think assumptions about the nature and extent of human uniqueness” (Evans “Cracking the Code” 315).<sup>23</sup> Thus, in order to maintain the integrity of the species hierarchy,

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<sup>21</sup> See Section III: “Communication, Language, and Meaning” in Marc Bekoff, Colin Allen & Gordon M. Burghardt (Eds), *The Cognitive Animal: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives on Animal Cognition*, (2002) for examples of nonhuman language studies including prairie dogs, dolphins, birds, domestic dogs, and primates.

<sup>22</sup> For Koko’s use of languages, see Patterson, Francine and Eugene Linden. 1981. *The Education of Koko*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Extensive research has been conducted into the language capacities of nonhuman primates. De Mello provides brief discussions of the abilities of Washoe and Lucy (chimpanzees), and Kani (a male bonobo or “dwarf chimpanzee”) (*Animals and Society*, 367-370).

<sup>23</sup> Evans makes this comment with regards to the way in which animal language research might support Darwin’ “case for continuity” specifically; that is, that language has evolved from precursors in the natural signals of animals. Darwin’s writings state that monkeys and chickens have distinctive alarm calls for

ideological forces including media and language (in the form of everyday, popular, and authoritative discourses), must continue to influence how “animal” language research is viewed and comprehended by Western consumers. The examples given above may have received widespread media coverage, but they have been presented as “novel” cases that provide entertainment rather than information or subversive challenges to existing hierarchies; importantly, the species referred to are not the kind that are farmed and slaughtered for the Western meat market. It is indeed telling that “animal” language research regarding the species that appear on Western supermarket shelves and menus seems to have been deliberately omitted by mainstream media. Karen Davis’ research into chicken cognition for example, has demonstrated their ability to communicate information about food, threats, and their environment, and to adapt their behaviour according to that information.<sup>24</sup> These findings are also supported by the extensive research into chicken cognition and communication undertaken by scientist Chris Evans.<sup>25</sup> “The humble and much-maligned chicken”, he writes, has a “remarkably sophisticated” system of communication; “its calls denote at least three classes of external objects. They are not involuntary exclamations, but are produced under particular social circumstances. Clearly, representational signalling is not restricted to our closet primate relatives” (“Cracking the Code” 321).<sup>26</sup> It is difficult, however, to find media articles detailing this research in publications and websites outside the realms of

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different kinds of danger and he also suggests that language is the product of sexual selection (Evans “Cracking the Code” 315).

<sup>24</sup> See Davis, Karen. “Thinking Like a Chicken: Farm Animals and the Feminine Connection”. *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations*, ed, Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995, pp 192-212.

<sup>25</sup> See ‘Cracking the Code: Communication and Cognition in Birds’, in Marc Bekoff, Colin Allen & Gordon M. Burghardt (Eds), *The Cognitive Animal: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives on Animal Cognition*, (2002), and Evans, Chris and Evans, Linda “Chickens Food Calls are Functionally Referential”, *Animal Behaviour*, vol. 58, no. 2, pp. 307-319 (1999).

<sup>26</sup> For a recent discussion of chicken behaviour and communication see also Robert Grillo’s “Chicken Behaviour: An Overview of Recent Science” on the *Free From Harm* website: <http://freefromharm.org/chicken-behavior-an-overview-of-recent-science/>

non-human animal welfare and ethical consumption. That the linguistic abilities of the “animals” we consume is less widely known – and indeed less of a priority for some researchers – demonstrates that the prospect of linguistic similarities between us and the species we consume is immensely discomfoting.<sup>27</sup> This shows the extent to which modern meat production and consumption rely heavily on the construction and maintenance of difference between the consumer and the consumed.<sup>28</sup>

Whilst the linguistic abilities of exotic birds and primates might appear to be less threatening than the recognition of such abilities in the non-human animal species slaughtered for meat, these studies still push against notions of human superiority based on linguistic ability; in doing so, they prompt the continual re-evaluation of what the term “language” actually constitutes and encompasses, and where the label might be applied. To use a phrase that encapsulates the quotation from Stephen Clark that provided an epigraph to this discussion: “the goal posts keep shifting” (Hursthouse 70) and they do so in order to maintain both the distinction between human and “animal” communication and the species hierarchy this distinction upholds. Just what exactly the term “language” constitutes, and whether or not the communicative abilities of non-human animals share aspects of human language, continues to be the source of much anxiety and debate for this reason. Nevertheless, the current status of the relationship between humans and “animals” slaughtered for consumption is enough to show that, despite the challenges contemporary research may present to ideas about language and

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<sup>27</sup> Thelma Rowell has conducted research into the behaviour of sheep in response to preconceptions about the abilities of certain “animal” species. She compared her results to her original subjects (primates). See Rowell, T.E. and Rowell, C.A. “The Social Organization of Feral *Ovis aries* Ram Groups in the Pre-rut Period.” *Ethology*, 95(1993): pp 213-32.

<sup>28</sup> It is important to note too, that Westerners often afford *companion* species communicative abilities whilst denying the same to “meat” species. Bob Torres refers to this differential treatment as evidence of a “false dichotomy” that is created by humans which “blinds us to the inherent worth and needs of *all* animals” (emphasis added, *Making a Killing: The Political Economy of Animal Rights* 2).

linguistic ability, such challenges remain easy to ignore. This is simply because we have for so long denied other “animal” species the facility for language and reason: “they cannot tell *us* how they feel, so we do not have to really pay attention” (De Mello 170) (emphasis added).

De Mello’s comments in this regard relate to the structuralist conceptualization of subjectivity. In the structuralist tradition, the capacity for language is considered an essential component of “the subject”. In what appears to be an extension of Descartes infamous “I think therefore I am”, structuralist philosophers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Martin Heidegger deem the formula for subjectivity to be something akin to “I speak, therefore I think, (therefore I am)”; in different ways, both propose language as “the centrepiece of the interactions of consciousness with both the world and others” (Mansfield 38). However, literary critic Cary Wolfe claims that it is taken for granted that the subject is “always already human” (1) and he also contends that the question of nonhuman subjectivity is repressed in most political and ethical discourse (1). Philosopher Matthew Calarco is also critical of this purported link between language and subjectivity. He writes:

If language is tied intimately to the constitution of the human subject then there is the risk that the subject is either determined by language (in the sense that language is received from outside the subject and thus structures and determines its ‘agency’ from without) or completely identical with language (in the sense that language is innate, thereby rendering human language identical with animal codes) (84-85).

Calarco's statements suggest that using the structuralist conception of subjectivity as a basis for the distinction between humans and "animals" is problematic at best, and yet this continues to be a dominant viewpoint in the West.

The denial of language and the consequential refusal of "animal" subjectivity are central to two of my chosen narratives in particular: Faber's *Under the Skin*, and D'Lacey's *Meat*. Both novels contain shocking depictions of the denial of language and subjectivity by "humans"<sup>29</sup> to their "animal" counterparts.<sup>30</sup> The authors' portrayal of the removal of the animalized others' ability to speak, results in a disturbing representation of the Western industrial meat system's denial of symbolic language and subjective experience to the non-human animals it continues to regard as expendable, edible resources.

In Faber's narrative, extra-terrestrial protagonist Isserley is charged with the task of selecting and capturing male "vodsels" (humans) (48) in order for them to be prepared, slaughtered, and packaged and subsequently transported to Isserley's home planet to satisfy the palates of wealthy "human" (alien) consumers. She offers rides to male hitchhikers waiting on Scotland's highways, tranquilizes the "specimens" (1) that meet her employer's requirements, and ferries them back to Ablach Farm for processing. The reader is not told exactly what occurs upon the vodsels' arrival at the farm, since the novel is focussed on Isserley's experiences and her role in the meat production operation situates her outside the actual preparation and slaughtering

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<sup>29</sup> I place both "human" and "animal" in square quotes here because these are conceptual and discursive positions which are occupied by different species in the narratives, depending on which one possesses power and therefore "naming rights". In *Under the Skin*, the word "humans" is used to refer to what we would refer to as "animals", or, more specifically, "aliens", and the words "animals" or "vodsels" for what we could call humans. In *Meat*, the terms "animals", "cows", "calves", "bulls", and "The Chosen" are all used to refer to humans deemed to be "animal" by the townsfolk, in accordance with religious doctrine.

<sup>30</sup> See above.

process - she must instead “seduce” the male hitchhikers with her fabricated human female features in order to elicit information from them and determine whether or not their disappearance will prompt a major police investigation. The physical alterations endured by the vodsels once they are delivered to Ablach Farm are therefore not revealed until well into the narrative. Isserley (and the reader) is confronted by the vodsels’ grossly altered bodies when she and fellow worker Esswis attempt to recapture a group set free by a visiting member of her own species, Amlis Vess – who is both the heir to production company Vess Incorporated which owns Ablach Farm and a vegetarian animal advocate who doesn’t “believe in killing animals” (114). Isserley encounters one escapee in the forest and a horrific description follows:

It had the typical look of a monthling, its shaved nub of a head nestled like a bud atop the disproportionately massive body. Its empty scrotal sac dangled like a pale oak leaf under its dark acorn of a penis. [...] Its mouth opened wide to show its cored molars and the docked stub of its tongue.

‘Ng-ng-ng-ng-gh!’ it cried. (100).

The physical and linguistic means of objectification are immediately made apparent in this passage: not only has the man been redefined according to his “age” in terms of the slaughter preparation process – he is now a “monthling” (similar to the way in which sheep become “hoggets” between one to two years of age, and female calves are called “heifers” up until the age of three) – and not only has he become “disproportionately” large and undergone a process of sterilisation (100), but he has, in a violent corporeal alteration, had his ability to speak physically eliminated: his tongue has been “docked” akin to the common removal of a lamb or bovine’s tail and the beak searing of day old chicks in the poultry industry. This transformation renders his

attempts to communicate useless. His cries now mimic the inhuman utterances of the very same “animals” Western producers and consumers deem incapable of “meaningful” communication in order to aid the legitimisation of their slaughter and consumption. The reason for his inability to communicate – the removal of the anatomical capacity to form words – also alludes to the many “animal” species who cannot “speak”, simply because their physiognomy makes it impossible to do so or because human apparatus (the laboratory, the farm, and the ideology) makes it impossible for humans to recognize “animal” vocalisations or gestures as meaningful communications. This denial of speech and subjectivity is further accentuated by the botanical imagery in this passage. The invocation of non-sentient life in the description of the vodsel’s dramatically altered appearance (a “bud” of a plant, an “oak leaf” and an “acorn” are all referred to) only adds to his objectification. The man is metaphorically consigned to the inanimate, “unfeeling” vegetable kingdom, as opposed to the animal kingdom.<sup>31</sup>

The arbitrariness of the denial of “symbolic” or “meaningful” communication and subjectivity, and the contradictory logic at work in Isserley’s attitude towards the vodsels’ facility for language, is made evident in a subsequent scene. Amlis insists that Isserley accompanies him to visit the underground vodsel pens because he has previously witnessed their attempts to communicate and he wants her to translate for him. He encourages one of the men to repeat the action and the vodsel accordingly clears a space in the earth and scrawls a word “with great deliberation, even going to the trouble of fashioning each letter upside down, so that it would appear right-way-up

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<sup>31</sup> Although this common conceptualization of plant life has also recently been questioned. See Michael Marder’s *Plant Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life*, New York: Columbia University Press (2013).

for those on the other side of the mesh” (171); the word he writes is “mercy” (171). Isserley is “disturbed” by this, and when Amlis asks her to translate she realises that “by sheer chance” the word was “untranslatable into her own tongue; it was a concept that just didn’t exist” (171). After considering whether or not she should attempt to verbalize the word, Isserley decides that to do so would be a mistake: “she would be dignifying the vodsels [...] with both writing and speech” (172). Instead she replies: ““What do you *mean*, “What does it mean?” It’s a scratch mark that means something to vodsels, obviously. I couldn’t tell you what it means”” (172) (original emphasis). On the one hand, Isserley attempts to highlight the “gap” in language which separates her species from the vodsels – the word means “something” to them, and not her, and is therefore not worthy of being considered language; it is merely a “scratch mark” and she believes that an attempt to say the new word would be like trying to “reproduce a chicken’s cackle or a cow’s moo” (171). And yet it is precisely the vodsels’ ability to communicate that makes it possible for them to be caught in the first place. Isserley’s conversations with the male hitchhikers help her to determine whether or not the disappearance of her prospective targets will cause trouble for her in the form of investigative police action and media coverage. Isserley’s contradictory attitude represents the way in which the real-world recognition of communicative abilities and subjectivities in non-human animal species is an arbitrary exercise that is based on what humans are set to lose or gain as a result. The word “mercy” is also a poignant choice here. It is as if the vodsels “speak” directly to the reader in this circumstance because Isserley cannot translate; the reader, however, is well aware of what it means. This prompts readers to consider that they may be “missing” what nonhuman animal species might be experiencing, feeling, or even attempting to convey to them, simply

because they privilege *their* language and subjectivity above the experiences, behaviours, and abilities of non-human animals.

The appearance of “mercy” here also foreshadows its invocation later in the narrative.<sup>32</sup> We soon learn that Isserley *does* have an idea as to what “mercy” means because she attempts to say it to whilst being sexually attacked by one of her passengers:

Desperately, she searched for the right word, the word that might make him stop.

It was a word she knew, but had only ever seen it written – in fact, only this morning, a vodsels had spelled it out. She’d never heard it spoken.

‘Murky,’ she pleaded (186).

Isserley’s pronunciation here is ironic; her translation of the word is itself muddled or “murky”, and she, like the vodsels who scrawled the word in the dirt, cannot make herself understood by the opposing species. The usually potent and emotive word becomes redundant in both of these passages, suggesting that the facility for linguistic communication is ultimately a non-essential factor in the determination of what is or is not ethical behaviour. The way in which Isserley’s species treats the vodsels, and the hitchhiker’s sexual assault on Isserley are presented as abhorrent acts and the ability to communicate – or not – is trumped by the blatant cruelty enacted by both “humans” and vodsels in Faber’s text. Faber’s critique echoes philosopher Jeremy Bentham’s infamous question regarding the treatment of non-human animals: “the question is not, can they reason? Nor, can they talk? But, can they suffer?” (311).

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<sup>32</sup> “Mercy” also makes an appearance at the conclusion of the novel. Isserley is involved in a vehicle accident and a woman reassures her that “The Mercy Hospital isn’t far” (295).

Despite Isserley's refusal to "dignify" the vodsels by acknowledging their facility for language, she is nevertheless "alarmed" at the notion that they might successfully communicate with Amlis (159). She believes it is better for him not to know the vodsels have a language, for a vodsels to demonstrate this, or "do something which resembled a human [a member of Isserley's species] action" could make an "ignorant observer jump to conclusions" – to see a similarity would be to undermine the dividing line between species and call into question their capture, slaughter, and consumption (173-174). As Isserley and Amlis get closer to the vodsels, Isserley hopes that all their tongues had been "thoroughly seen to" (170), to avoid this threat to the species boundary. The contradictions inherent in Isserley's attitude towards the vodsels' ability to communicate critique the way in which Western producers and consumers arbitrarily deny language and subjectivity to non-human animals so as to continue using them as objects fit for consumption.

Whilst the descriptions of the vodsels' defiled mouths are disturbingly graphic, the portrayal of the actual process itself is only ever described by Isserley in euphemistic terms; it is simply referred to as the vodsels' being "docked" or "seen to", both in the excerpt above, and again when Isserley expresses concern at the possibility of their successful communication with Amlis: "It was a good thing the vodsels were always unconscious when they were carried into the steading", she notes. "Then by the time they were up and about again they'd already *been seen to*, so they couldn't make any more noise" (174) (emphasis added). The violent nature of this denial of speech and language is further downplayed when she explains that the procedure "nipped any problems in the bud." (174).<sup>33</sup> The appropriation of a colloquial phrase here (which

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<sup>33</sup> See note 30.

carries with it yet another reference to non-animal life – the “bud” of a plant) camouflages both the reality of the vodsels’ experience and the denial of their subjectivity. Her language also mimics the “doublespeak” (Glenn 64) used within the Western meat industry which is “intentionally misleading by being ambiguous”; the use of words such as “processed” or “packed” instead of slaughtered, and “dressed” or “disassembled” rather than “butchered” (Luke 174) - a phenomenon that will be addressed more fully in my second chapter. The combined effect of the employment of euphemistic language, the portrayal of the captives’ futile attempts to communicate, and the metaphorical denial of speech portrayed through the removal of the vodsels’ tongues, is the amplification and denaturalisation of the refusal of “animal” subjectivity by the humans that objectify them in order to legitimize their consumption.

D’Lacey’s narrative contains a similar denial of the facility for speech and language in non-human animal species: he too, portrays his “animals’” ability to speak removed by human intervention. In *Meat*, however, the objectified humans are not conditioned and slaughtered for the benefit of alien species; rather, they are branded, farmed, killed, sold, and consumed by other humans. The inhabitants of Abyrne - a town encased by barren wasteland and the detritus of former settlements - rely on meat for physical, spiritual, and financial sustenance. Magnus Meat Processing (MMP) is the town’s largest employer and the consumption of meat is endorsed and encouraged by the presiding religious order known as the “Welfare”. Members of the order assess the citizens’ commitment to the spiritual teachings, namely, the daily consumption of meat from the “Chosen”. It is these teachings, found in the “Gut Psalter” (52) and the “Book of Giving” (58) that describe how “The Father sent his own children down to earth so that [...] his townsfolk might eat” and that “they give themselves freely” so that “none shall

ever be hungry” (76-77). This is the justification for the animalization, slaughter, and consumption of humans known as the “Chosen”.

D’Lacey’s protagonist, sympathetic slaughter-man Richard Shanti, laments the treatment of the Chosen and the physical process by which they are “made animal” early on in the narrative. He disengages himself from the violent nature of his work, observes the “calving pens”, and fantasises about a world in which:

...the calves weren’t taken from their mothers to be “worked”. Their fingers weren’t clipped down to the second knuckle, their thumbs weren’t removed, *their tongues were whole and their vocal cords intact*. The males weren’t castrated and none of them were hobbled by the removal of their big toes... (19) (emphasis added).

As he walks away from the pens he hears “the only scream of the Chosen that was ever heard by MMP employees, that of a new-born calf...” and knows that the stockmen would soon be there “to silence [the] calf for the rest of its life” (25). A disturbing physical description of the altered bodies of the Chosen is also provided early in the narrative. Shanti watches the bull “BLUE-792” in its enclosure, a “heavy set, club-boned reproductive giant” with “three hundred pounds of meat” – “a fighter honed by generations before him to physical and sexual superiority” (13). As the “bull” taps on the aluminium wall of his pen with “the tips of his incomplete fingers” (13) Shanti listens to the “‘hhaa’ and ‘ssuh’ sounds that issue like panting from [BLUE-792’s] half open mouth” (13) and sees his “grim” mouth contort into a grin, revealing his “slickened, toothless gums” and “yellow-coated tongue”(14). In the same way that Faber’s vodsels become objectified through the enforced transformation of their bodies, which includes (amongst other changes) the physical removal of their ability to speak,

so too is the transformation from human to “animal” in the Chosen portrayed through the simultaneous alteration of their limbs, reproductive organs, and in particular, the parts of the mouth necessary for verbal communication. In both Faber’s and D’Lacey’s texts, the loss of the human’s ability to speak is intrinsically linked with its shift into the realm of the “beastly animal” that exhibits “brute” bodily presence rather than consciousness or communicative ability, and this loss contributes to the “animals” subsequent objectification.

Not only is the ability to speak violently revoked, but those in power utilize their own (and very much intact) facility for language to further animalize and objectify the “others” they wish to consume in D’Lacey’s novel. Whilst this aspect of the novels will be discussed further in the next section, it is worth noting here that in addition to their physical transformation, the Chosen become linguistically transformed - just as the hitchhikers in *Under the Skin* become “monthlings” and indeed “vodseles” rather than humans, D’Lacey’s edible humans are referred to collectively as “The Chosen” and the children of The Chosen become “calves” (19) and “cattle” (5). The Chosen are also referred to by a colour and number, for example: “BLUE-792” (13) and “WHITE-047” (18). Here, D’Lacey makes a direct reference to the way farmed animals are objectified by being labelled as merely colours and numbers, or “units” rather than living creatures. And, in the same way that Isserley employs euphemistic language (“docked” [Faber 100]) to describe the removal of the vodseles’ tongues, in D’Lacey’s novel the Book of Giving, which stipulates that the Chosen must be rendered silent, also depicts the physical alteration in a euphemised way via metaphor. One passage reads: “Thou shalt keep my children silent by paring the reeds in their throats at the time of birth. Their silence is sacred and they must never speak the words of heaven” (76). Again,

objectifying and euphemistic language makes an appearance: the reference to an object, the “reed” found in woodwind instruments conceals the reality of the commandment, naturalizes its existence and continuation, and renders the Chosen object. In addition, the scriptures are camouflaged by the titles given to them: The Book of Giving, in fact, condones incessant “taking” of speech, subjectivity, and mortality. These fictional scriptures are particularly relevant in terms of the way in which religious doctrine has influenced human and non-human animal relationships generally (an aspect of the text which will be considered in more depth shortly). However, the critiques within these passages can also be applied on a wider scale. D’Lacey’s narrative shows how authoritative discourses in general are appropriated to legitimize the continued denial of speech, language, and subjectivity in non-human animal species – particularly those which Western societies wish to consume. This description also reiterates the multi-faceted critique that can be drawn from Faber’s text: that language can deny certain non-human animal species the facility for “meaningful communication” whilst also “hiding” the ways in which this denial takes place and camouflaging the disturbing or problematic aspects of Western meat production.

Finally, in *Meat*, D’Lacey buttresses his representation of these processes by portraying forms of inter-species communication that occur in spite of the Chosen’s being rendered anatomically speechless. Richard Shanti’s deciphering of the Morse code-like taps, clicks, and hisses of the Chosen, and his utilisation of this language in order to help liberate them from captivity, poignantly suggests what might be possible if humans were to cease the denial of language to nonhuman animals, and stop “shifting the goalposts” of what language constitutes. During one of Shanti’s visits to the bull “Blue-792”, he hears the creature “tap its finger stumps on the wall” and the “whispered

hissing and sighing coming from the bull's mouth"; he then wonders if any other Magnus Meat Processing employees have noticed the Chosen "signalling" each other this way and doubts that "anyone had the time for observation. None of them took the same interest he did." (64). Later, as Shanti attempts to learn the Chosen's language, he explains why he thinks he is able to understand it and why the rest of his co-workers are not. "Snatches of their language had come to him" he thinks. "He didn't understand how exactly, only that it must have been the same way he picked up language from his own family as he grew up – because he *needed* to know it" (117) (emphasis added).

This idea is expanded in the following passage:

On a subliminal level he heard the sounds every day. All the stockmen did. Therefore in some way, the sounds the Chosen made must have become, at the very least, a ubiquitous part of MMP [Magnus Meat Processing] life. Such sounds would have been prevalent in every part of the factory, penetrating the unconscious mind of every worker. Shanti surmised that it would only take a little extra effort to begin interpreting the sounds and rhythms the Chosen made, translating them into the language of the townsfolk. He had worked there for ten years. It was no wonder that, once he'd *decided* it was language the Chosen were using and not just random noise, he'd come to understand it so quickly (117-118) (emphasis added).

This passage describes how Shanti is able to understand the Chosen because their language is now defamiliarized; he thus understands because he *wants* to, and because he now recognizes that he is constantly surrounded by the sounds which constitute their language. Yet for other MMP employees, the language of the Chosen is easy to ignore for this same reason; the sounds and signals are everywhere and thus, they fade

into the background or are rendered “invisible” in the same way that authoritative discourses become normalised and naturalised in our world. The opposing attitudes of Shanti and the other meat workers alludes to the way in which humans *decide* what “language” constitutes, *decide* whether or not to deem “animals” capable of “meaningful” communication, and *decide* whether or not to attempt to understand the language of the “other”, rather than a lack of “animal” communicative ability being a proven and universal truth. Shanti’s willingness to listen and “learn their tongue” (222) also inverts the question that underpins much of the “animal” language research undertaken to date; that is, “can animals learn to speak human language?” becomes ‘can humans learn to speak animal language?’” (Fudge *Animal* 127-128). This inversion “pulls out from under us the notion of our inbuilt superiority” that pervades this area of research (128) and consequently undermines the human-animal hierarchy based upon that notion of superiority.

That human and nonhuman-animal forms of communication might have more in common than widely believed is also alluded to in *Meat* when the townsfolk of Abyrne utilise similar “codes” of communication instead of the spoken word. Vegetarian prophet Collins and his followers use a “gentle series of coded taps” to communicate without MMP interference (D’Lacey 197), and when a bus of townspeople journeys to a secret “bull” fight (between two male members of the Chosen) MMP worker Torrance kicks a wall “three times quickly and twice slowly” (163) in a manner similar to the taps of the Chosen in order to gain entry. This similarity is further accentuated by the other human sounds described in the same passage which also sound like the language of the Chosen: Parfitt’s “heels clicked and echoed on the concrete stairs” as they drew near to the fighting and the sounds of the crowd behind the doors to the “bull-ring” are

described as animal-like: their “muffled voices” “could have been roaring” (163). And later in the novel, Shanti notices the similarities between the taps, clicks, and hisses of the Chosen and the sounds of the slaughterhouse: “A sharp hiss here followed by an abrupt tap mimicking the noise of the bolt gun. Then a shivering, faltering beat upon the panels as stumps of fingers imitated the nerve shudders of the brain-shocked calves. A soft scraping to mark the sound of chains...” (222-223). D’Lacey thus transgresses the divide between “human” and “animal” behaviour and language and suggests that the two may have more in common than might be widely believed.

D’Lacey’s depiction of the similarities between human and non-human animal communication is not limited to audible language. The efficacy of body language and the similarities in this type of communication exhibited by both the human consumer and the “animal other” are also made evident. For example, Shanti observes his wife’s movements before he leaves for work one morning and notices the following:

She shrugged like she suddenly didn’t care and busied herself at the kitchen sink. He watched her back. There was language in the movement and he thought he understood it now like never before in their fifteen years of marriage. He knew what people’s bodies said, what the bodies of the Chosen said. Maybe he’d never allowed himself to read her before (219).

Not only are similarities between the body language of “people” and “the Chosen” referred to here, but the notion of allowing oneself or being able to “read” this language is made explicit. This reiterates the idea that human attitudes about “animals” comes down to the ingrained and powerfully authorised capacity to ignore the communicative abilities and subjectivities of the latter. Shanti’s attitude, shared only by the underground minority in D’Lacey’s novel, illustrates that the choice *not* to ignore, is an

uncomfortable, effortful, and difficult route that is inconvenient and even risky when confronted by the authoritative majority.

It is important to note, however, that these portrayals of the similarities between human and non-human animal communication are somewhat problematic. On the one hand, similarities between human and “animal” communication might blur the boundary between the two and disrupt the species hierarchy, which is what D’Lacey portrays in his narrative and what Isserley fears in *Under the Skin*. On the other hand, drawing attention to similarities in this way might also be seen as a reinforcement of that boundary because it suggests that our attitude towards other species is dependent on how much they are “like” us with respect to communicative ability - thus, the human is placed in the privileged position once more, and the tie between language and subjectivity remains intact.<sup>34</sup>

Philosopher and animal rights theorist Tom Regan puts forward an alternative conceptualization of subjectivity which highlights this fracture in D’Lacey’s representation of language and subjectivity. In his landmark text *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983), Regan pushes back against structuralist notions of subjectivity by arguing that “animals” are “subjects-of-a-life” if they have “beliefs and desires; perception, memory, and a sense of the future, including their own future [...] the ability to initiate action in pursuit of their desires and goals; a psychophysical identity over

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<sup>34</sup> A similar criticism can be made of Mitchell’s portrayal of the human clones (“fabricants”) in *Cloud Atlas*. These objectified slaves-come-fodder are intentionally deprived of a large vocabulary in order to make them compliant and efficient workers. If a fabricant’s vocabulary and facility for language expands, it is referred to as “ascension” (191) and fabricant Sonmi~451 describes hearing the “voice of sentience” prior to learning and utilising new words. Mitchell’s treatment of language and subjectivity here reflect the dominant structuralist viewpoint. For a discussion on the “liberating” role of language in *Cloud Atlas*, see Louise Economides’ “Recycled Creatures and Rogue Genomes: Biotechnology in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas*”. *Literature Compass* 6.3 (2009): 615-631.

time..." amongst other criterion (243). Or, as W.J.T. Mitchell writes: "it is the non-linguistic that matters just as much [...] the silence, the stare, the gesture, the reflex" (xiii). Whilst the criteria stipulated can lead to difficulties in determining which "animals" should be included and which should not, the key aspect of Regan's philosophy is that "animals" are the subjects of experience whose lives matter to them, regardless of whether they matter to anyone else. Thus, according to Regan, the facility for language is not defining factor in terms of subjectivity. If we follow this "subject-of-a-life" proposition, similarities between human and "animal" language need not be drawn in order to recognize non-human animal subjectivity.

According to literary critic Carol McGuirk, the limitations of D'Lacey's portrayal of the human/animal division is one shared by many authors whose narratives depict the relationship between language and subjectivity and its impact on the human conceptualization of "the animal". Though her work centres on science fiction narratives in particular, her statement that "speculation about [the] animals creates special problems, most centrally that of conveying a self-aware identity outside human language" is, nevertheless, relevant to this discussion. She continues: "Science-fictional machines and aliens, [and "animals"] however greatly they may differ in motivation from human characters, are seldom portrayed as significantly other in their modes of communication" (281). This is particularly relevant to D'Lacey's "Chosen".<sup>35</sup> The animalized humans are not "significantly other" in the way that they communicate;

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<sup>35</sup> Faber's vodsels do not apply here, as they are humans who have been born and raised as such, with the ability to communicate as we do. D'Lacey's "Chosen" are animalized from birth.

rather, the similarities between human and “animal” sounds and languages are continually made apparent.<sup>36</sup>

However, this apparent “deference” to language and its relationship to subjectivity might well be a result of the form of the narrative itself, rather than an authorial intention. Again, McGuirk’s comments are pertinent: “It is difficult for a writer” she states, “to imagine a consciousness apart from language and the consensus history, accurate or not, that written records transmit. To *write* as part of an effort to question the traditional hierarchy of species is [...] not so much to risk as to court paradox” (282) (original emphasis). Drawing on Derridean philosophy, McGuirk observes that “reconsidering the human in relation to other species is perplexing [...] because it requires defining value apart from the hierarchies and histories that language encodes and transmits” (282). Thus, when criticizing the importance or function of language, the writer is inevitably bound by language itself, for “there are facts that do not consist in the truth of propositions expressible in human language” (Nagel 166,168).

Despite this limitation, the visceral depictions of the denial of speech and language in the non-human animal other, and the euphemistic descriptions and rationales that accompany these depictions in both the novels I have focused on above, nevertheless powerfully illustrate the “traditional division” between the human subject and the nonhuman animal object at work – the possession and non-possession of language – and how we actively deny certain species certain abilities in order to determine our “ethical obligation to them [and] whether it is acceptable to kill them and eat them” (Dillon 138). This active denial is assisted by the employment of authoritative

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<sup>36</sup> That the Chosen are in fact *human* does somewhat problematize the issue; however, in the context of the novel’s criticisms of Western meat production and in light of the Chosen’s animalization since birth, their status as “other” still lends McGuirk’s comments some weight here.

discourses which work to further objectify nonhuman animals and legitimise their slaughter on the mass scale required to satisfy Western profiteers and palates. It is these discourses which are the subject of analysis in the following section.

### **Dictating Fate: The Power of Discourse**

Looking around for some other reason why people can hold such very different opinions about the same animals, time and time again the same culprits appear. Words. Language. [...] Many words are loaded with so much baggage of their own that we fail to spot the effects they are having on us. So, in rethinking attitudes to animals, and trying to see what questions we really need answers to, there can be no better place to start than with the words we use to describe them.

- Marian Stamp Dawkins, *Why Animals Matter* (2012, p.7).

Words were the first weapons for breaking a man. Sometimes they did the job long before the knives.

- Joseph D'Lacey, *Meat* (2008, p.103).

Whilst the ability of nonhuman animals to utilise “complex” language remains the subject of continual examination and contestation in modern societies, the notion that

humans constantly utilise their own facility for language in order to keep “animals” very much “caged” in their place within the hierarchy of species is less contestable.

“Language, along with the written word” writes animal rights activist Marjorie Spiegel in her landmark text *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery*, “serves to perpetuate and reinforce prejudicial attitudes prevalent in our culture, and indeed, our language is deeply imbued with the terminology of the master’s perspective” (38). On the other hand, as the fictions discussed in this thesis illustrate, language might also be a way in which we might begin to liberate ourselves and other animals from these boundaries. The fictional excerpts analysed thus far not only highlight and challenge the objectification of certain “animal” species through the active denial of complex linguistic capability by the Western majority, they also illustrate the multi-faceted role that language itself plays in the separation of the human from “the animal”; in particular, they bring to light the authoritative and camouflaging discourses at work in the maintenance (or indeed the defence) of the boundary between the two. Theological, scientific, technological, and “carnist”<sup>37</sup> discourses name and classify nonhuman animals, and work - both individually and collectively - to transform “animals” from living entities to consumable objects. In addition, these discourses legitimize the objectification of these “animal” bodies and ultimately naturalize their continual consumption by the Western majority. Indeed the cross-discourse term “meat” itself, illustrates this transformative power of language, as Carol Adams writes: “When we turn an animal into “meat”, [...] a unique being is converted into something that has no distinctiveness, no uniqueness, no individuality [...]. In essence we are to view the living animal as though already dead...” (“Eating Animals” 63).

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<sup>37</sup> I adopt here Melanie Joy’s use of this term, as described in the Introduction (see also: *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows*, p. 30).

The way humans have come to define and use the terms “human” and “animal” (as discussed earlier in this chapter) and the ways in which they “talk about” these terms, exemplifies the inextricable links between discourse, knowledge, and power as discussed in the writings of philosopher and social theorist, Michel Foucault. For Foucault, what are deemed to be societal “truths” are contained in various discourses, or “well-bounded areas of social knowledge” (McHoul and Grace 31). These discourses are created and utilized by authoritative institutions to maintain their power within a society that becomes “disciplined” due (in part) to its acceptance and employment of (or “belief”) in these forms of language. In *Power/Knowledge* (1972), Foucault describes how societies contain “manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body” and states that “these relations of power cannot themselves be established without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse.” (93). In other words, the way in which we talk about the world around us, and in particular, the ways in which we define and categorise the things within that world, serve to uphold the power relationships at work in our society. This is clearly evident in the way we talk about “animals”, as De Mello points out in *Animals and Society*: “Animals are defined through humans linguistic categories – pet, livestock, and working animal – and these categories themselves are related to how the animal is *used* by humans” (15) (emphasis added). Thus, defining and categorising “animals”, and maintaining the boundary between the concepts of “the human” and “the animal”, assists in the endeavour to exercise power over them. Given that “many of the concepts, dispositions and sensibilities that comprise ‘human nature’ rely upon perceived differences and similarities between ourselves and other animals” (Simmons and Armstrong 2), the language we employ when talking about animals is inherently related to the language we use to talk about ourselves; thus, by defining “animals” we are also

able to define humans as a superior species, with rights, privileges, and power over non-human animals and the environments we inhabit.<sup>38</sup>

The labels and categories we assign to different animal species are part of a larger framework of discourses that support the species hierarchy and promote the consumption of certain types of “animal” flesh. These discourses contain – and promulgate – particular types of “knowledge”, “facts”, or “truths”, which are then used to separate humans from non-human animals; create demand for meat products (through pervasive marketing); to justify developments in meat production (such as genetic modification and factory farming); and to euphemise the violence of slaughter as well as the disturbing realities and consequences of factory farm conditions and biotechnologies. Foucault’s assertion that discourses are “practices that systematically form the *objects* of which they speak” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 32) (emphasis added) is particularly pertinent in an analysis of discourses at work in the realm of the human-animal divide, for this precisely describes how scientific, capitalist, theological, technological and carnist discourses transform sentient “animals” into commodified *objects* in whatever way suits those in power - those that quite often have a commercial interest in the commodities produced. Due to the authoritative quality of these various discourses, the hierarchies and ideas that are embedded within them become part of the dominant ideology. In this way, discourses and the “knowledge” or “truths” that they put forward, become naturalized and normalized. Yet Foucault also described how dominant discourses inevitably give rise to counter-discourses. These opposing “ways of speaking” challenge the legitimacy of the “knowledge” created, employed, and

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<sup>38</sup> I refer specifically to the Western conceptualizations of this hierarchy here and acknowledge that this divide does not necessarily exist in the same way in other cultures.

disseminated by those in power, and resist the “truths” touted by authoritative groups and individuals (33).

Just as the novels of Faber and D’Lacey rendered visible the way in which the denial of “animal” language is used to uphold the human-animal divide, so too do they bring to light the way humans use language to support the species hierarchy. These “invisible” discourses are revealed, their authority is questioned, and their operation is subverted in ways that destabilise the boundary between “human” and “animal”. Consequently, the novels demonstrate that the division between human and nonhuman animals is “not a distinction based on the possession of language” but rather a “division *created by language*” (Dillon 135) (original emphasis); and, by presenting this notion through their own use of language and treatment of various discourses, including counter-discourses, they suggest that this division might not only be upheld by language, but dismantled by it also.

A powerful component of Faber’s defamiliarization of the human-animal divide and the discourses at work in the maintenance of that divide, is his re-assignment of the labels “human” and “animal” in *Under the Skin*. As briefly mentioned in the previous section, in Faber’s narrative Isserley’s alien kind are referred to as “human” and human beings are referred to as “vodsels”; these subversive labels are not only utilized by the characters within Faber’s novel, but are also contained within the omnipotent third person narrative. “This act of species renaming,” writes literary critic Sarah Dillon, “is a crucial textual method of destabilizing the reassuring divisions that we, the readers, as a species draw between ourselves and the animals we eat, experiment on, or otherwise do ‘justified’ violence to” (139). Not only does this re-categorization and assignment of an unknown label destabilize those divisions, but it also exposes and upsets the

linguistic process by which we endeavour to keep “the human” and “the animal” apart and demonstrates how discourse works to “produce[s] this distinction” (140). Faber’s renaming is powerful: the term “vodsel” is assigned to humankind, rather than adopted by us, and therefore “human” authority over language is removed. This “defiant act of literary renaming” thus forces humans to adopt the position of the “animals” over which “we have, for so long, practiced linguistic and thus actual domination” (140).

This disruption of the status quo and demonstration of the power of discourse is further accentuated in Faber’s use of other alien words – particularly those that are used with reference to humans (“vodsel”). After joining Amlis Vess on his visit to the underground vodsel pens, and being both frustrated and disturbed by one vodsel’s attempts to communicate, Isserley contemplates her attitude towards the creatures she has captured. She says that certain behaviours and actions demonstrated by vodsel could easily be confused with gestures “analogous with human [her own species] supplication” which could make “the ignorant observer jump to conclusions” (173-174). She muses:

In the end, though, vodsel couldn’t do any of the things that really defined a human being. They couldn’t siuwil, they couldn’t mesnishtil, they had no concept of slan. In their brutishness, 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 (174).

This passage poignantly illustrates the power of discourses to define and categorize those considered to be the “other”, and how those definitions and categories allow those in control of the language to then exert power over the “others” themselves. The “comparative deprivation” this excerpt demonstrates, (Dillon 139) reflects the way

humans use discourse to negate or deny particular qualities of the “animal other” as they see fit. What is most effective is the way in which Faber’s readers are forced to occupy the position of the “other”, because the words are wholly alien to them; they are not mentioned again in the book, nor are there any hints or explanations given as to what they might mean. Thus, the reader loses “control” of the discourse, and is prompted to reflect on just how much power comes by way of the employment and acceptance of various discourses in day-to-day life.

In addition to this subversion of labels, Faber also draws our attention to the operation and power of discourse through his use of culinary, “animal”, plant, and meat-related imagery, and points out that what we deem to be “edible” or “object” is as much constructed by language and discourse as the human-animal divide. Throughout the text, things that we would usually consider to be “inedible” are compared to various foods (including “animal” meat species) and plant material; the result of which, is often troublesome and disconcerting. In doing this, Faber shows us that “animals” are objectified by the language we use to describe them in that they are referred to as though they are “always-already meat” (Vint 24): as “units” of “stock” in a factory farm, or slaughterhouse killing line. An over-arching “carnist” discourse, which is itself a conglomerate of scientific, capitalist, theological, and technological discourses, is brought to light and subverted in order to critique its operation.

The most obvious example of this critique comes by way of the descriptions of Isserley’s targets which demonstrate how “vodsels” (humans) are objectified and made edible through language or “carnist” discourse. For example, Isserley wants to “size them up” (1), avoids “puny, scrawny specimens” (1) and looks instead for “fleshy” (3) males in their “prime condition” (4) that “make the grade” (4). The “humans” are also

objectified when they are compared to various “animal” species, some of which are regularly consumed by Westerners. For example, one hitchhiker is described as having “beefy hands” (20) and Isserley laments the prospect that she may have to “put him back” like an undersized fish due to the fact that he has a family. Another target has a “pigeon chest” (11), another, a “meaty rump” (32), another still a “meaty face” (119), yet another has “porcine eyes” (218). The legs of a captured vodsel flop out of a vehicle “like a pair of giant salmon” (108), and a driver of an oncoming farm foods vehicle is referred to as “an insect behind tinted glass” (21). Objectifying botanical imagery is also frequent in Faber’s text. Isserley describes how a “drably shaded [vodsel] would metamorphose suddenly from a tree-branch or a tangle of debris into a fleshy biped...” (3) and that she would drive by, “narrowly missing the tip of the hitcher’s hand as if the fingers might have been snapped off, twig-like, had they grown just a few centimetres longer” (3). One hitchhiker has an Adam’s apple that bulges “like a real one stuck in his neck” (20), another has a “pink melon” head (177), whilst others look like “peeled potatoes, each with a little splat of brown sauce on top” (24), and vodsel clothes are compared to “layers of cabbage or radish” (212) or “the colours of rotting banana peel” (175). Amlis Vess also informs Isserley that his father has always thought of vodsels as “vegetables on legs” (171).<sup>39</sup> Food-related imagery is also used elsewhere in the text, causing other objects and aspects of the environment to seem “edible”. Early in the novel, Isserley watches the “waddling bodies” of truant school children be “swallowed up in the grey soup of the rain” (25) and later, when she and Eswiss drive around the

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<sup>39</sup> The use of plant imagery in this way is poignant when viewed in light of the language of slaughter – particularly words of French origin. For example “abattoir” comes from the French “abattre” or “cause to fall” which is a forestry term. Also the French term for “dressing” an animal carcass is “habillage” which relates to “abillier” or the preparation of a billet of wood. See Vialles *From Animal to Edible* (pp. 22-23 and 49).

farm looking for escaped vodsels, they transverse “a massive pie-slice some three miles in parameter” (97). In addition, the chute that holds the vodsels before the removal of their tongues is described as “gleaming and elegant like a giant gravy boat” (211), and even language itself is presented as something edible, although aptly unpalatable: Isserley asks one hitchhiker “Where are you heading?” and the question “hung in the air, cooled like uneaten food, and finally congealed” (177).

This critique is enhanced when the idea is subverted with reference to things we usually consider to be edible. When “human” (vodsel) food is referred to in the text, the edible becomes inedible, and disconcertingly so. For example, when Isserley stops at a petrol station she notices she has spilled chocolates in her car and that they “had found hiding places in every cranny like rotund beetles” (154); an unpalatable similarity is proposed here. She then picks up the box and reads the ingredients:

‘Sugar’, ‘milk powder’, and ‘vegetable fats’ sounded safe enough, but ‘cocoa mass’, ‘emulsifier’, and ‘lecithin’ and ‘artificial flavours’ had a chancy ring to them. In fact, ‘cocoa mass’ sounded positively lethal. Her gut-reflex queasiness was probably Nature’s way of telling her to stick to the foods that she knew (155).

An everyday food such as chocolate becomes suspicious and sinister when described in this manner, and again the power of language to make something palatable, edible and/or object is illustrated; food is defamiliarized here. The reader is also prompted to think about how often they actually read and comprehend the ingredients listed on the food they readily and frequently consume.

Finally, Isserley's own body and the bodies of female vodsels – their breasts specifically - are described with food-related imagery. Whilst watching television, Isserley observes the female vodsels hanging clothes out to dry and how they “teetered on tiptoe, jumping like infants, their pink breasts quivering like jelly” (153). Her own breasts are described by one hitchhiker as “a couple of ripe ones” (11) and in the shocking description of her sexual attack, her assailant “began to knead her breasts with the hand that wasn't holding the knife, each breast in turn, repeatedly trapping the nipples between thumb and forefinger, rolling them like pellets of dough” (184). The critique in these passages is two-fold. Not only does it illustrate the objectifying power of language, it also destabilises the human-animal boundary by highlighting the entanglement of human and “animal” welfare: both the dominant and subordinate species can be made “edible” by language. The disconcerting use of food imagery to make women's bodies “edible” is also evident here and is a feature that I will discuss in depth with regards to the use of the cannibal motif in Chapter Three.

In *Meat*, D'Lacey's approach to the discourses which support the human-animal divide is slightly different. He intertwines theological and scientific discourses in ways that illustrate how both can become dogmatic bodies of language which create and reinforce the hierarchical relationship that upholds Western meat production and consumption. The connection between meat, nutrition, and religion is made apparent early in the novel, when protagonist Richard Shanti and his wife Maya discuss the health of their daughters, Harsha and Hema. Maya tells Richard she is concerned that their daughters are underweight and that the doctor has told the girls they need more protein (46). Richard responds by saying that their weight is “perfectly normal”, and that he cares about their “spirits”, to which Maya responds: “Richard, in this life, talk of the

spirit is irrelevant. You have to care about our bodies...” (47); she then appeals to the heavens: “Dear Father, she thought, he really doesn’t understand. He’d rather see us die for some inexplicable righteousness than live a healthy life” (47). For Maya at least, the dominant discourse of health and nutrition trumps theological notions of the afterlife and righteousness, and yet they are entangled in the way she appeals to a higher power for assistance in making her husband understand her belief that meat is a nutritional necessity - a matter of life and death.

This entanglement is solidified when Maya informs Richard that the “Parson of the Welfare” intends to visit. When Parson Mary Simonson attends the Shanti household for dinner, it is revealed that her job is to assess families and ensure that they meet Welfare standards by consuming the adequate quantity and quality of meat; if not, she may report them which could result in the loss of employment or the removal of children from the home (53). During the meal, which consists solely of well cooked, high-quality meat steaks, the Parson asks Maya why Hema and Harsha are thin and sickly. “A healthy, well-nourished child shouldn’t be getting sick...” she comments, adding: “Illness is not something to be taken lightly, as you know if you read your Gut Psalter regularly. Illness is a matter to be taken very, very seriously indeed” (55). Here, the intertwining of religious and health-related discourse is again made evident, and the authoritative, dogmatic nature of both is made clear by both the Parson’s invocation of nutritional discourse in her capacity as religious “enforcer”, and in the fact that the entanglement of the discourses has been codified in textual form – the Gut Psalter, a sacred set of scriptures which describes the status of the Chosen, and how they should be treated by the townspeople.

The Gut Psalter also stipulates that the sacred flesh of the Chosen should not be wasted and should be used as “medicine” for all manner of illnesses by consuming the part of the body of the Chosen that relates to the bodily area of sickness: “To heal your eyes, eat their eyes. To heal your stomachs, eat their stomachs. To drive out madness, eat their brains. Heal yourselves; my children are your medicine” (77). The fact that Parson Mary Simonson’s stomach pains gradually worsen after consuming the stomach of the Chosen as the Gut Psalter dictates, provides a powerful undermining of continual unchallenged compliance with dogmatic discourses and the self-serving manner in which they operate; a cycle of endless consumption is created that maintains the both the discourse itself and the political standpoints inherent within it.

It is important to note, however, that D’Lacey’s novel does not dismiss theological discourse altogether: it is, after all, a counter-faith which ultimately overthrows the meat baron Rory Magnus. The order, led by Shanti’s twin brother (a fact not revealed until the conclusion of the novel) embraces and empowers Richard, grows in strength and number, and eventually succeeds in freeing The Chosen from Abyrne. This positive counter-faith demonstrates that within the realm of discourse, knowledge, and power, lies the possibility for the establishment and growth of subversive or counter discourses, and that these alternative viewpoints can lead to a substantive change in the status quo. D’Lacey’s narrative suggests that it is rather the dogmatic utilisation of discourse, the employment of the language to favour some and demote others, and its “unchallenged” following by Western consumers, that leads to adverse consequences.

D’Lacey’s spiritual “counter-faith” mirrors the way vegetarian and vegan movements draw on authoritative discourses to create and promote their own counter-

discourses and ideology. For example, while Western carnists (and those who profit from the Western meat industry) use the discourse of science and nutrition to promote meat consumption, proponents of veganism and vegetarianism use the same discourse relating to health and nutrition to suggest that a meat-free or vegan diet and lifestyle is not only possible but more nutritious; there are a growing number of resources which offer in-depth nutrition-based information which detail the nutrients gained from consuming plant-based foods, as well describing the adverse effects of a diet with a high meat and “animal” protein content.<sup>40</sup> The appropriation of such a dominant discourse to promote an alternative ideology is demonstrated by the teachings of “Prophet” John Collins’ “counter” faith. The dominant religious discourse in Abyrne is based on references to sacrifice and consumption and the same language is used by Collins and his followers. For example, in light of the declining demand for meat products as a result of Collins’s new religious order, meat baron Rory Magnus questions the “prophet” about his teachings. Collins explains that “I live on God. It’s as simple as that. [...] what I’m doing is eating God” (122). He goes on to say: “God is the only food there is. The only flesh. The only nourishment.” Such statements are a reaction to the same type of language used by the dominant order, who’s Book of Giving stipulates that: “The Father sent his own children down to earth so that we, his townsfolk, might eat” and that by sharing in the “bounty” provided by God’s children, the citizens of Abyrne would be “united” with their God (76).

Both the Book of Giving and Collins’s teachings also reference the Christian sacrament of Holy Communion, whereby bread and wine are transformed by language

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<sup>40</sup> For examples see: Vegan Health(<http://www.veganhealth.org/>), Vegetarian Resource Group (<http://www.vrg.org/>), Vegetarian Society (<https://www.vegsoc.org/sslpage.aspx?pid=760>)

into the body and blood of Christ and consumed by members of the Church. Whilst Collins states that he is “eating God” (122), the Welfare’s Book of Giving has the following commandment: “Thou shalt eat of the flesh of my children. My children are your cattle. Break their bodies as your daily bread, take their blood as your wine” (76). D’Lacey’s invocation of the Eucharist highlights the transformative power of discourse and the potency of this linguistic transformation. When considered in light of the novel’s overarching engagement with the ideologies and practices of Western meat production and consumption, the ability of various discourses to transform living subjects into consumable objects is made all the more apparent. In the following section, I continue my discussion of the transformative power of language; though this time, the authors’ use of potent imagery to destabilise the “human/animal” and “subject/object” binary provides the basis for analysis.

### **Humanimals: Zoomorphic Imagery and Metamorphoses as Challenges to the Human-Animal Divide**

The most extreme image of the subhuman is intensely revealing of a culture’s vision of what it means to be human and of its appetites both spiritual and material.

- Maggie Kilgour, *From Communion to Cannibalism* (1990, p.viii)

Now. I heard a twig snappin' in a fringe o' firs b'hind us. Not the fluky wind it weren't, nay, it was a leg done it sure nuff, but a foot or hoof or claw I cudn't tell.

- David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas* (2004, p.266)

Thus far, my discussion of the authors' treatment of the human/animal divide has been based on their respective representations of the relationship between language, communication, and subjectivity. In this final part of Chapter One, my analyses focuses on the authors' creative use of language – namely zoomorphic imagery and the depiction of metamorphoses – to further rupture that boundary. As discussed earlier, traditional Western conceptualizations of “the human” and “the animal” are based upon notions of difference; the terms exist as part of an entrenched system of binary categorization which creates and reinforces the idea of a “them” and an “us”, and is a necessary ally in the maintenance of hierarchical relationships. Therefore, the Western task of determining “the human” has primarily included both explicit and implicit comparisons with “animals” in order to show that one possesses particular qualities that the other does not (Christou 63). This, in turn, facilitates the “addition of humanness” and the “extraction of animality” in such a way that allows humans to put aside certain shared characteristics in order to be seen as “distinctly human” (63) with an inherent value that justifies their dominance over nonhuman animals. However, recent portrayals and characterizations of “the human” are providing challenges to this tradition. “A familiar feature of the rhetoric of much recent art and philosophy”, writes Steve Baker in *The Postmodern Animal*, “has been the characterization of the human self or body as impure, hybrid or monstrous in contrast to the allegedly uncreative

propriety of modernist and humanist accounts of subjectivity” (99). Literary and visual texts within the horror genre, for example, contain a vast array of monstrous human bodies and “humanimal” hybrids to varying degrees and effect. Such characterizations call into question what it means to be “human”, erode many of the purported differences between humans and non-human animals, and undermine the species hierarchy. *Cloud Atlas*, *Meat*, and *Under the Skin* continue this recent trend through their employment of zoomorphic imagery and their depictions of various transformations and metamorphoses.

In a subversion of the *anthropomorphic* imagery (the attribution of human characteristics to the non-human) which commonly features in fables and fantasy narratives, the humans in these texts are consistently depicted in *zoomorphic* or “animal” terms. Most significantly, the application of this imagery is not limited to the description of human characters which are “animalized” for the purposes of objectification and, subsequently, consumption. Many of the dominant players in the texts, including those who actively “animalize” others, are compared to a wide range of “animal” species in terms of both appearance and behaviour, and as a consequence, the line which separates “human” from “animal” becomes unclear. By bringing the human subject and the “animal” object closer, these zoomorphic comparisons and references to “animals” oppose the Western tradition of comparing the two to demonstrate difference and establish a hierarchical relationship. Instead, sameness is cultivated and the reader is continually reminded of human “animality” and the extent to which the lives of humans and nonhuman animals are inextricably intertwined.

Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* is rife with the attribution of “animal” features to human characters, and many of these are found in the first of the novel’s interlocking

narratives, which is entitled: “The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing”. These sections depict traveller Ewing’s adventures around the Chatham Islands of New Zealand in the nineteenth century, and contain numerous descriptions of “animal-like” humans. Whilst comparisons of this nature might seem relatively commonplace in literary works, the sheer volume of zoomorphic imagery and the frequency of “animal” references suggest that Mitchell is deliberately drawing our attention to their operation.

For example, in the very first entry of Ewing’s journal, the narrator describes tracking a trail of footprints through various flora and fauna until he stumbles upon a character by the interesting name of “Dr Henry Goose” (3), who uses numerous “animal” references to colour his conversation with Ewing. He explains how he means to seek revenge on an acquaintance by exposing a secret of hers at a public event, and says of a potential witness: “That boor shall *roar*” whilst the “twittering wits” (4) of an audience will support his claim (emphasis added). Later, Goose and Ewing take a walk and come across a group of “Indians” whose slaves are described as displaying an “inbred, bovine torpor” and who emit a “bizarre, bee-like ‘hum’” (6). The “whip master” at this gathering had “lizards mighty and small” tattooed across his body, which causes Ewing to remark: “his pelt would fetch a fine price” (6), and Goose beckons Ewing to leave the scene by with the ironic statement: “Come, Adam, a wise man does not step betwixt the beast and his meat” (7).

The following diary entries continue in this vein. Ewing describes his excursion into a local tavern and sees a Mr Boerhaave, sitting amidst friends “like Lord Anaconda and his garter-snakes” (7); tavern-owner Walker offers Ewing a one-third discount on a “quarter-hour’s gallop on the comeliest filly” in his “stable” (7) and describes the Widow Bryden is a “frigid old sow” who “must be on her last trotters if she’s letting Dr Quack

frisk her" (11); during a visit to the Evans family home, an "Indian farmhand" is described as the "fleetest sheep-dog who ever ran upon two legs", Ewing explains how the mention of California and gold "beckon all men thitherwards like moths to a lantern" (23), and Dr Goose announces: "so ornery a mule is the common sailor..." (23). Later, during Ewing's journey aboard a sailing ship, he steps on a squid that had an eyes and beak reminiscent of his father-in-law (38); the captain, Molyneaux, is described as having a "pale, horny-toad complexion" who sizes up the stowaway slave, Autua, as if he were "inspecting a mule"(35), and Autua views the European sailors as bird-like creatures: he calls their ship the "Great Albatross" that bore with it "vividly-plumaged, strangely-jointed servants who canoed ashore, facing backwards..." (30).

Imagery of this kind is found throughout each of the narratives – not just Ewing's colonial diary. For example, the next narrative in Mitchell's saga contains a series of letters from composer Robisher, to his love interest Sixsmith. In this correspondence, Robisher describes the labouring types with "parrot voices" (44) and working class citizens that have "1/2 crowns and threepenny bits squirrelled away in their sour Stepney mattresses" (44); he describes his business encounter with a man named Jansch, who "put his hairy paw" on Robisher's knee and calls him a "young buck" (74); his mistress is like a "mooring moon-calf" after lovemaking" (85), her daughter Eva is a "hawk-eyed creature", and her young man-friend is a "scrofulous toad" (85). There are a great many more descriptions like these throughout *Cloud Atlas*. The samples I have given are chosen to demonstrate both the variety and the indiscriminacy of Mitchell's "animalization" of many human characters; that is, those considered to be the foreigner, the savage, or the "Other", and those who occupy positions of authority, are all portrayed in this way.

In addition to these zoomorphic descriptions, there are constant references to the human use of actual “animals”. When coupled with zoomorphic imagery, these references shake the foundations of the species hierarchy; a sense of uneasiness is generated when descriptions of objectified “animals” are interspersed with portrayals of human/“animal” similarities and makes the mastery of one by the other much more problematic. For example, when Ewing first meets Dr Goose, the latter wears an “outsized Beaver” hat (a hat made of beaver fur, commonly worn during the nineteenth century) (3); Goose also refers to Marchioness Grace of Mayfair’s “tortoise-shell soup tureen” (4). Later, we’re told a Maori chieftain wears a “feathered cloak” (6), that the Widow Bryden was “thrown from her horse” (11), that the Evans family parlour is “inhabited by a monstrous hog’s head (afflicted with droop-jaw and lazy-eye) that had been killed by Mr Evans’ twin sons on their sixteenth birthday” (9), and that the twins are “honest woolly fellows” who own “two hundred head” of sheep (9-10). Ewing’s journal also contains references to the history of Rekohu (Chatham Island). He notes the “passing whalers” who “wilfully marooned pigs to propagate a parlour” and the native Moriori who were “foragers, picking up *paua* shellfish, diving for crayfish, plundering bird-eggs, spearing seals [...] digging for grubs and more” (12). He also describes how visiting sealers turned the ocean “pink with seals’ blood” by gathering “over two thousand pelts *per boat!*” (original emphasis)(13), and that sealers turned to “farming potatoes, sheep and pig-rearing on such a scale that the Chathams are now dubbed “The Garden of the Pacific” (13). Again, observations such as these are found throughout each of the narratives within *Cloud Atlas*, and when read alongside the constant comparisons between humans and “animals”, these references to the human use of “animals” inevitably become unsettling.

D'Lacey creates a similar effect in *Meat*, by constantly animalizing those high-ranking members of society responsible for the continual animalization and objectification of the Chosen, whilst also describing in graphic detail, the process of preparation and slaughter undergone by the same animalized creatures. For example, meat magnate Rory Magnus is described as having an overgrown beard and ginger and white "mane" (101); at one point, he puffs on a cigar and exhales "two streams of smoke from his nose", like a bull (102); Magnus' man-servant Bruno notices that his "ruddy bear" of a boss (151) "sounded more like an animal every day" (241), and The Grand Bishop refers to him as a "cockroach" (267). Magnus is also animalized through various meat-related comparisons. The prophet John Collins tells Magnus he is "nothing more than a walking, talking carcass of fat and meat" (106); he is also described as having a "meaty fist" (234), wags a "sausage finger" in reprimand (129), and leaves "a flank open" whilst engaging in a fist fight with Collins (152).

Other characters are also compared to various "animals". Prophet John Collins moves like a "very lean, confident and deliberate cat" (147); Bruno is referred to as Magnus' "top dogsbody" (244), whilst his henchmen are "beefy and bulky" (278); during a confrontation between Magnus' men and Collins' followers, slaughterman Rick Shanti runs at the front of Magnus' army "like a whippet before a pack of wolves" (278) and deems the group "easy prey" for the vegetarian dissenters with "birdlike hands" (298); fear of malnourishment yanks Richard's wife Maya "like a fishhook" (114); Parson Mary Simonson's fingers feel like "claws" in the midst of her sickness (225), and Richard's twin girls, held captive by Magnus, crawl out of their hiding place "as quietly as snakes" (296).

In between these (and other) examples of “animal” imagery, are graphic accounts of the ways in which the townsfolk of Abyrne objectify the Chosen. Slaughter is depicted in detail: the bolt gun splits the jaw and breaks the cheekbones of one “bull”, and shoots “through the bull’s windpipe and down into the lungs” (5); the “scalded animal” is beheaded, then “flayed and disembowelled by skimmers and gutters” and the skin and organs are sorted into “uniform batches of products and by-products” – the lower intestines are processed at a gas facility, and the skins are kept for tanning (18). The breeding programme for the Chosen is also revealed; there are “mating pens” where prized “bulls” are kept (21), and where “meat cows” and “dairy cows” are routinely “inseminated” (20). The “cow” milking site and process is also described (33-37), as are the signs and symptoms of the mastitis infection: “Mastitis caused swelling of the udder and teat. Passing milk would be accompanied by a more intense ache than the milking machines usually caused [...] The increasing pain caused to the milker was not taken into account” (32); and if the “cow” did not recover, “it was cheaper for Magnus to sell his milkers as meat than it was to treat them for the infection. Milkers whose mastitis worsened into fever were slaughtered, their meat sold for the most basic burger and sausage mince” (32). Just as Mitchell weaves references to the various ways humans objectify “animals” in amongst zoomorphic descriptions of humans, so too does D’Lacey, in order to elicit cognitive dissonance in his readers. The species hierarchy becomes difficult to maintain when the human use of “animals” is continuously fettered by descriptions of “animal-like” humans.

In addition to the employment of zoomorphic imagery and references to the many ways in which humans objectify “animals”, the process of metamorphoses from human to “animal” or “animal” to human – or the transformation into “humanimal”

hybrids – is also found throughout each of the texts and bring to light questions about the relationship between humans and non-human animals. As literary scholars Gymnich and Costa note, “the depiction of a human-animal transformation is virtually bound to challenge culturally dominant assumptions about animals as the ‘other’ of humankind” (69), and the transformation which occurs in *Under the Skin* in particular, does exactly that. Transformation and metamorphoses occur significantly in *Meat* (humans are “animalized” when transformed into the Chosen) and *Cloud Atlas* (fabricants may reach “ascension” and change from automaton objects to free-thinking subjects) and the details of these are briefly discussed elsewhere in my analysis. However, it is the portrayal of metamorphosis in *Under the Skin* that most effectively subverts the traditions of the trope, thereby providing a particularly potent and effective way of critiquing the human-animal hierarchy.

In some ways, Faber’s depictions of human-animal/animal-human transformation are part of a long-standing literary tradition; the “motif” of metamorphosis has been “part of the collective memory in many different cultures” and its continued invocation can be explained by the “fundamental anthropological questions that tend to be raised by a human-animal transformation as well as by the sense of wonder such a metamorphosis is likely to inspire” (70). However, Gymnich and Costa also point out that in literary works, the transformation often occurs due to some supernatural force or power or because of a “natural, evolutionary process” (71). The metamorphosis depicted in *Under the Skin* contradicts this tradition; in a direct reference to the technological advancements that facilitate contemporary transformations of both human and “animal” bodies, it is the technological intervention on the part of species undergoing transformation that is the cause of metamorphosis.

Despite this difference, however, the transformation that appears in Faber's narrative still produces the same effect that traditional examples of the motif of metamorphosis engender: "the fear of encountering the 'other' lurking inside the human being" (71); consequently, this portrayal rocks the hierarchical foundations of Western meat production and consumption.

Protagonist Isserley is a human-alien hybrid. Though her metamorphosis does not occur during the narrative itself, the reader learns that she has undergone a series of drastic operations which allow her to blend in with the vodsel population and entice male hitchhikers to accept her offers of transportation. Isserley chooses to undergo the transformation to avoid "toiling in filth like a maggot among other maggots" back in the estates on her home planet (Faber 65) and decides to make the "sacrifice" to walk on two legs (65). Isserley's "human" (alien) species usually walks on all fours with limbs "exactly equal in length, all of them equally nimble"; they have prehensile tails which can assist with balance "tripod-style"; a torso that tapers into a long neck; fur all over their bodies; long spearhead ears, and "vulpine snouts" (110). Isserley, however, has half of her backbone amputated and metal pins inserted to help her stand upright (127), her real teats, budding naturally from her abdomen" are surgically removed and "puffy artificial ones" modelled on pictures from a magazine are grafted onto her chest (178), she must shave her fur frequently, has scars all over her body, and also wears large corrective lenses (203).

Faber's depiction of Isserley's metamorphosis is powerful in a number of ways. Firstly, the reader is "tricked" into believing, for the first part of the novel at least, that Isserley is "human"; we are not informed of her alien origin until part way through the narrative, and nothing in the tone or setting of the introductory chapters that alerts the

reader to elements of horror or science fiction. In this way, Faber critiques the “anthropocentric assumptions” readers automatically make about literary characters, and produces “an ironic twist on the readers’ expectations” regarding metamorphoses (Gymnich and Costa 85). The boundary between “human” and “animal” is compromised when the reader learns that the character they have so far believed to be a female human, is in fact a surgically altered and enhanced member of an extra-terrestrial species (85). This subversion of the trope of metamorphosis where “animal” becomes “human”, rather than “human” becomes “animal” also invites the reader “to see human beings, themselves, from an alien point of view” (85).

Furthermore, Isserley is disgusted and embarrassed by her transformation and considers herself a “freak” (Faber 75, 92, 93). She explains how the men she worked with on the farm had “been shocked” by her appearance at first, but that “they were used to her now, more or less; they could go about their business without gawping...” (75). At one point, she is humiliated that she accidentally admits that she sleeps in a vodsel bed instead of “like a human being, on the ground”: “in one humiliating instant”, she thinks, “she’d thoughtlessly given him [co-worker, Ensel] the gift of the tawdry truth, a vision of an ugly freak sleeping on a strange oblong structure [...] her body wreathed in sheets of old linen, just like a vodsel” (92). She also anticipates how Amlis Vess will react upon meeting her: “He’d be expecting to see a human being, and he would see a hideous animal instead. It was that moment of...of the sickening opposite of recognition that she just couldn’t cope with” (75).

Isserley’s inner monologue during her and Amlis’ visit to the vodsel pens is also potent and ironic; she asks herself whether or not the “creatures” have dignity, and wonders: “Had she been so badly butchered, brought so close to animal state physically,

that she was losing her hold on humanity and actually *identifying* with animals?" (172) (original emphasis). There are multiple ironic twists in Isserley's response to the vodseles in his passage. At the moment she recognises the possibility of the "creatures" dignity, she remembers her contempt for them; this in turn reminds her of the indignity she feels in becoming like them and consequently this once more denies the possibility of their dignity and restores the species hierarchy. Here, Faber challenges the "desirability of being human" through Isserley's "de-humanizing" metamorphosis. Consequently, the idea of losing one's humanity - which, Gymnich and Costa note, "often haunts the individuals experiencing a metamorphosis in literary texts" (85) - is mocked in Faber's text. For Isserley, becoming "human" (vodsel) means pushing herself "across the dividing line into bestiality" (Faber 250) and to be "exploited, used like a piece of brute equipment..." (152). When considered in light of the objectified way in which the vodseles' are viewed and treated by Isserley's species, Isserley's "reverse metamorphosis", and her attitude towards it, can be read as a "cultural- critical meta-discourse of the way human beings treat animals in the meat industry" (Gymnich and Costa 85); the reader is challenged to occupy the status of "Other" and reflect on the human-animal hierarchy which allows for that treatment to continue.

Both the portrayal of metamorphoses and the use of zoomorphic imagery in these novels offer vibrant and often unsettling representations of the human-animal divide and continually undermine the separation of the human/animal and subject/object. The use of imagery in this way, along with the authors' unsettling representations of the denial of "animal" language and subjectivity and their defamiliarizing portrayals of various discourses which perpetuate carnism, all work together to destabilise the hierarchical foundation upon which Western meat

production and consumption currently rests. In addition to breaking down this hierarchy, the authors also depict in uncomfortable detail some of the problematic realities of industrialized meat production, including “animal” biotechnology, intensive farming, and slaughter. Thus, not only are the issues with the *practice* of meat-eating revealed in my chosen fictions, but the hidden aspects of the *process* are also made visible.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### **Animal Meat Machines and the Means to their End:**

#### **Biotechnology, Factory Farming, and Industrialized Slaughter**

Surely meat is the most magic and beguiling of commodities – one that just *appears*, bearing almost no trace of its brutal origin. That rows of wrapped, severed cubes of flesh, perhaps adorned with labels decorated with cartoon pigs or cows, are *just there in the shop* [...], is one of the strangest normal things in our world. Meat, [...] can be defined as the paradigmatic commodity...

- Chris Otter, “Civilizing Slaughter: The Development of the British Public Abattoir, 1850-1910” in *Meat, Modernity and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse* (2008, p.106) (original emphasis).

Nestled in greaseproof paper, it winked at her, still moist and warm, irresistible and disgusting at the same time. She’d eaten it, even licked the juices from the creases in the paper, but she never mentioned it to Ensel afterwards, and that was the end of that.

- Michel Faber, *Under the Skin* (2000, p.91)

Whilst the contemporary Western attitude towards “animals” raised for consumption might not look much different from that held by the consumers of Descartes’ time, our current methods of meat production and our understanding of its origins and transference from farm to plate, are a far cry from the methods used (and the average citizen’s knowledge of them) during the Early Modern period. In stark contrast to the contemporary seclusion of “animal” rearing and slaughterhouse facilities, the cohabitation of humans and livestock was a commonplace occurrence during that period and the killing and butchering of “animals” was “very much a part of domestic activities” (Fudge *Renaissance Beasts* 17). In addition, the Early Modern marketplace presented citizens with unadorned and readily identifiable cuts of “animal” flesh including offal and blood. Carving a larger, identifiable piece of meat at the dinner table was also common practice, as was presenting animals with their heads still attached (Fitzgerald 59). According to Fudge, such acts were an attempt to “recreate” the animal prior to consumption in order to demonstrate “humanity’s absolute power” (“Saying Nothing” 76); in addition, recipes from the 1600s refer to dishes used for cooking as “coffins”, which emphasised the “presence of the animal” and its “symbolic burial” by the human chef (77). These practices are a far cry from the pre-cut, packaged, and less discernible goods on offer in the supermarkets of today. Thus, whilst meat may not have been quite as pre-eminent in the diets of our Early Modern ancestors (Fiddes 2), they were nevertheless far more aware of, or indeed familiar with, both the “animal” from which their cuts of meat originated, and the violent realities of “animal” slaughter.

Yet changes in both ideology and technology, some originating in the Early Modern period and some before it, were already paving the way for a departure from such practices. The onset of the Commercial Revolution (a time of economic growth and

European colonialism) in the latter part of the thirteenth century encouraged the growth of a capitalist economy that “increasingly regard[ed] the world as resource” (Vint 26), and promoted all things within that resource as mere objects for the human subject (26). The intensifying allegiance to capitalism and the vast amount of wealth this movement generated were the catalysts for the Industrial Revolution (Rostow 107): a period which lauded the exponential growth in commerce and buttressed it with technological advancements, particularly in the realms of manufacturing and transport. This period of extreme growth led to an increase in urbanization and a corresponding decrease in the number of citizens raising and slaughtering “animals” themselves. The widening gap between urban and rural areas also supported the burgeoning distinction between sentimentalized household pets and the increasingly objectified “animals” grown and hunted for meat (De Mello 49). It was only after these significant ideological and technological transitions that the wheels and cogs of capitalism were able to turn towards the onset of a relatively recent revolution in “animal” husbandry, meat production, and slaughterhouse methods. The last one hundred and fifty years alone have seen the arrival of intensive farming practices in the form of factory farms or Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs);<sup>41</sup> an intrusive scientific influence in terms of selective breeding,<sup>42</sup> feeding, and disease or sickness management;<sup>43</sup> and the mechanisation and compartmentalisation of slaughter and meat packing processes.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Foer credits the Steele family of Oceanview, Delmarva as the “accidental” founders of the factory farm in 1923 (*Eating Animals*, p.105).

<sup>42</sup> The chicken genome was sequenced in 2004, the bovine in 2009, that of the pig is “imminent” (Richard Twine, *Animals as Biotechnology*, p.15).

<sup>43</sup> A team of American scientists based in New York is credited with discovering the efficacy of adding antibiotics to livestock feed in 1950 (Ogle, Maureen “Riots, Rage and Resistance: A Brief History of How Antibiotics Arrived on the Farm” *The Scientific American*, 2013).

<sup>44</sup> Chicago’s infamous Union Stock Yard (the subject of Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*) opened in 1865 and it was one of the first processing plants to introduce the conveyer belt. By the 1880s, slaughtering in the US had become “an industrialized, mass-production industry” (Fitzgerald, 61), aided also by developments in refrigeration, and refrigerated railroad carts (Steinberg, 192).

Each of these recent additions to the meat production narrative has contributed to an ever-increasing distance between Western consumers and the “animals” they eat. Factory farm operations are closed off to the public and closely guarded, the tools of biotechnology and the financial means to fund it are held by a select few, biotechnological experimentation primarily occurs behind laboratory walls located in the private realm, and industrial slaughterhouses, too, are hidden from the general population.

The objectifying discourses (or the over-arching “technological metadiscourse” [Benton and Short 2])<sup>45</sup> employed at these various stages of production also contribute(s) to a lack in consumer understanding of how “animals” are treated in order for their meat to be produced and facilitates the further development, expansion, and proliferation of these aspects of industrial meat production. Discourses that objectify or “mechanomorphise” certain “animal” species results in a “dramatic reduction of actual bodies” acknowledged within the system (Warkentin 86). Nonhuman animals are such as chickens and hogs are not raised but “grown” inside factory farms (Scully 22) and have become mere “units” of production (Imhoff 74);<sup>46</sup> in the laboratory they are reduced to their genetic information (“genomes”) or productivity rating (“EBV” – estimated breeding value) (Twine 15);<sup>47</sup> and in the slaughterhouse, little mention is made of the “killing” or “butchering” of “animals” - instead they are “processed”, “disassembled” and “packaged”.<sup>48</sup> By creating and maintaining a physical and linguistic

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<sup>45</sup> See introduction for detailed explanation of this term.

<sup>46</sup> Broiler chickens breeds, for example, are referred to as “industrial poultry stocks”, and numbered, not named, so that commercial information and dispersion may be controlled (Potts, 149).

<sup>47</sup> Richard Twine also discusses the Biotechnology Industry Organization’s (BIO) use and of the terms “old” and “new” with regards to biotechnology; he deems this a “transparent intention to *normalize* so-called ‘new’ biotechnologies” (emph added) (*Animals as Biotechnology*, 14).

<sup>48</sup> The “distinct and non-overlapping” terms used to distinguish the animal from its flesh also come into play here (Vint, 33): pork rather than pig, beef rather than cattle, and so on. (See also Adams *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, p.74.)

gap between the “human subject” and the “animal object”, the profiteers of industrial meat production preserve the meat-centric status quo.

Now that contemporary agriculture is primarily viewed as “an industry with values of efficiency and productivity” rather than as “a way of life and as a practice of animal husbandry” (Rollin 8), the vast majority of consumers do not regularly engage with the “animals” they eat, nor do they scrutinize the processes that enable them to purchase and consume those “animals”. The status quo remains, despite the work of oppositional movements such as veganism and environmentalism and the campaigning undertaken by “animal” welfare organizations to make consumers more aware of meat production processes. And, whilst the “New Carnivore” movement in some ways re-introduces human consumers to the “animals” they eat via portrayals of “happy meat” and depictions of slaughter, these attempts at addressing the visibility of the “animal” are limited at best. This is because they are primarily based upon certain types of “animal rearing” (“free-range,”) certain types of slaughter (usually “home-kills” or artisan butchery) and are directed towards a certain kind of consumer (those that can afford the type of meat produced in accordance with these “value” judgments” and indeed those willing to “consume” these “New Carnivore” television programmes, books, and articles in the first instance). Such offerings present “animals” in “mediated forms”, whilst ensuring they remain “purged from city geographies” (Vint 1). Therefore, the realities and consequences of factory farming, biotechnology, and slaughterhouse operations remain largely unseen and therefore uninterrogated by most Western consumers. The seclusion of these facets of contemporary meat production enable and encourage the public to “forget about the animal as an independent entity” (Adams *The*

*Sexual Politics of Meat* 66) causing most of the “animals” raised and slaughtered for the purposes of consumption to become - and remain - “absent referents” (66.)<sup>49</sup>

Through their respective fictions, D’Lacey, Faber, and Mitchell have taken up the task of *re-presenting* the animal, and helping the public *remember*. As I have argued already, these novels pose a challenge to the anthropocentric ideology which naturalises meat consumption via the transgression and interrogation of the boundary between “the human” and “the animal”. I now want to show how these texts intensify their focus on meat production by graphically portraying some of the hidden and disturbing realities and possible consequences of biotechnology, factory farming, and slaughterhouse operations, thereby addressing the gap in understanding that currently exists between the consumer and the consumed. The texts address how these developments and the language associated with them have influenced the way current producers and consumers view – or rather do *not* view - the “animals” that are bred, fed, confined, killed, packaged and shipped to supermarkets around the world to satisfy their palates. *It is finally time*, these authors seem to say to Western meat consumers, *to meet your meat*.

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<sup>49</sup> See the Introduction for my initial use and explanation of this term.

**Genetic Modification and Cloning: Biotechnologies of the Dystopian Future**

Winter, spring, and summer passed away during my labours; but I did not watch the blossom or the expanding leaves [...] so deeply was I engrossed in my occupation...

- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818 (1994), p. 68)

The battlefield was at the molecular level...

- David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas* (2004, p.342)

Whilst the term *biotechnology* can be used to refer to everything from traditional selective breeding methods (Twine 14) to the use of genetically modified animal feed (Stull & Broadway 11), it is the recent “refinement of quantitative genetics” (Twine 14) and the increasing genetic “malleability” of certain animal species (14) that provide the focus of this discussion: genetic modification and cloning in particular, will be placed under the critical microscope. The former encompasses three main procedures: the insertion of “novel” genetic material (transgenesis) (16), the addition of genetic material from the same species (cisgenesis), <sup>50</sup>and the modification of pre-existing genes in order to alter or “switch off” their usual function (16). Modifications such as these might now be regarded as a permanent fixture in the realm of commercial crop

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<sup>50</sup> Jacobsen, E.; Schouten, H. J. (2008). "Cisgenesis, a New Tool for Traditional Plant Breeding, Should be Exempted from the Regulation on Genetically Modified Organisms in a Step by Step Approach". *Potato Research* 51: 75

growing,<sup>51</sup> but their utilization in “animal” species – particularly those raised for meat – is very much the subject of contemporary research and experimentation.<sup>52</sup> The United States Meat Animal Research Center, for example, has recently isolated a gene that produces “double muscling” in cattle, with the hope of producing leaner cuts of meat (De Mello 92). Other research facilities have been experimenting with the genes of pigs to “locate and expunge that part of their genetic makeup that makes them stressed in factory farm conditions” (Scully 26). In 2002, geneticists at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem “developed” a featherless chicken which they branded as “environmentally friendly” due to the removal of the need for feather disposal (Potts 172-173), and philosopher Steven Best notes that some “macabre visionaries” anticipate the engineering of chickens and pigs with “flesh that is tender or can be easily microwaved, and chickens that are wingless so they won’t need bigger cages” (9). As recently as November 2013, Environment Canada approved the production of transgenic salmon eggs for commercial purposes. If the approval of other regulatory bodies is given, these genetically modified (and trademarked) AquAdvantage salmon may be the first ever transgenic animal to be incorporated into the North American food supply.<sup>53</sup> However, the prospect of these types of modified meat becoming readily available on supermarket shelves has not gone without criticism. The projected efficacy of the

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<sup>51</sup> According to the U.S. Centre for Food Safety, as of 2013, approximately 85% of corn, 91% of soybeans, and 88% of cotton produced in the United States were genetically modified and it is estimated that upwards of 75% of processed foods contain genetically engineered ingredients. See “About G.E. Foods” *Center for Food Safety Issue 311* (<http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/issues/311/ge-foods/about-ge-foods#>)

<sup>52</sup> Some GM animals have been approved (by the Food and Drug Administration in the US and the European Medicines Agency) but not order to produce food stuffs. E.g. goats have been used to produce recombinant antithrombin (an anticoagulant protein drug) See: Pollack, Andrew “FDA Produces New Drug From Gene-Altered Goats” *The New York Times* (2009) <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/07/business/07goatdrug.html?pagewanted=all&r>

<sup>53</sup> See Upton and Cowan “Genetically Engineered Salmon” *Congressional Research Service* (April 20 2014) <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43518.pdf>

modifications, the risk to animal health,<sup>54</sup> and possible adverse environmental effects of their introduction have all come under scrutiny.<sup>55</sup>

With regards to cloning technology, the human consumption of meat from cloned “animal” species was approved by the FDA in 2008 (almost twelve years after Dolly the sheep made headlines as the first animal to be successfully cloned from an adult somatic cell<sup>56</sup>), and meat from cloned “prized breeder” animals (De Mello 92) has subsequently been on the menu for many Western consumers. Cloning is made possible by inserting the nuclear DNA from a donor cell into an egg that has previously had its own nuclear DNA removed (a process called “somatic cell nuclear transfer” or “SCNT”) (Twine 16). Once the elements in the recipient cell have combined and the cell has subdivided, the new embryo that is created is then implanted into a female host (16). This process “bypasses the caprice of the genetic lottery and random shuffling of genes” in order to facilitate the mass reproduction of a “devised type” – a profitable enterprise for life science companies (Best 6). The development and utilisation of this method of molecular intervention has not been immune to controversy either. Despite calls for the meat from cloned animals to be clearly labelled and a proposed temporary ban on the cloning of animals for food in the European Union, in December 2013, the European

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<sup>54</sup> “A variety of health complications” have arisen from the increased production of lean meat in some cattle as a result of the selection of this gene (De Mello, *Animals and Society*, 92).

<sup>55</sup> See Menozi, Mora, Merigo “Genetically Modified Salmon For Dinner? Transgenic Salmon Marketing Scenarios” *Journal of Agrobiotechnology Management and Economics* 15.3 (2012) 276-293. Genetic manipulation technologies are also being used to create “painless meat” – where the cells of “animals” are harvested and replicated in a laboratory setting (see Maastricht University’s research <http://culturedbeef.net/>). My chosen texts do not include representations of this technology, however it has been portrayed recently in Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* (2003). See also Jovian Parry’s “*Oryx and Crake* and the New Nostalgia for Meat”. *Society and Animals*, 17(2009): 241-256.

<sup>56</sup> See Wilmut I, Schnieke AE, McWhir J, Kind AJ, Campbell KH. “Viable offspring derived from foetal and adult mammalian cells”. *Nature* 385.6619 (1997): 810–3.

Commission refused to end the current practice of selling unlabelled cloned animal meat (imported from the United States) to British consumers.<sup>57</sup>

In light of these recent issues raised by the utilisation of genetic modification and cloning technologies, an interrogation of the reasons behind their development and a consideration of the possible implications of their employment is timely and warranted. That Western governments have sanctioned the isolation and manipulation of animal genes in order to “transcend the limits of nature’s productive cycles” for the purposes of profit maximisation (Vint 32) and that “few [scientists] condemn the suffering caused to animals or position animal cloning research itself as orally wrong or problematic” (Best 11) is evidence that the Cartesian notion of the “animal-machine” most definitely continues to permeate Western attitudes towards animals raised and slaughtered for meat. This lingering Cartesian attitude and the biotechnologies it has spawned are represented in David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas*.

In Mitchell’s sombre depiction of the dystopian future, both genetic modification and cloning are presented as technologies which not only rely on the notion of the “animal-machine” to take place, but are also used further to objectify and mechanize animals by the removal of various traits and characteristics. Thus, these biotechnological “advancements” are portrayed as means by which those in power are able to create classes of consumable beings that are docile *objects* whose cultivated genetic and physical sameness prevents them from being viewed as *subjects* worthy of moral and ethical consideration. However, the possibility that these (and other) modified and manufactured entities might indeed “fight back” despite the best efforts of

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<sup>57</sup> See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/10525282/Meat-from-cloned-animals-need-not-be-labelled-EC-says.html>

biotechnologists and their financial backers to render them incapable of doing so, is also portrayed. These depictions echo the depiction of the scientific quest to “dominate both nature and the body” and the autonomy and defiance of Frankenstein’s Creature in Mary Shelley’s infamous gothic tale *Frankenstein* (1818) (Economides 619). They also issue a warning to the proponents of unfettered scientific experimentation and influence, as well as the consumers who remain oblivious to its operation and scope.

In *Cloud Atlas* the animalized and mechanized products of genetic modification are human clones, though this fact is not acknowledged by the “corpocracy’s” “consumers” (Mitchell 188). Created in “sophisticated cybernetic machines” (Economides 624), these “biological cyborgs” (615) are referred to as “fabricants” (Mitchell 188) and are essentially slaves manufactured *en masse* for the servitude of humans. Deceived into thinking they will eventually join the human population if they work hard enough, fabricants are instead used in various industries until they are considered too old to serve efficiently. Once they have earned the requisite number of “stars” to signal the end of their lives as workers, they are then led to one of the corpocracy’s “Golden Ark[s]” (357) where they are slaughtered and processed into meat products for “pureblood” (human) consumption (191).

The fabricants’ fate is described in the fifth and seventh of Mitchell’s nested narratives which feature the recorded testimonial or “orison” (187) of Sonmi~451, a female fabricant and former server at popular fast-food franchise, Papa Songs. Sonmi~451 explains that batches of identical fabricants are grown from various “stem types” (189) four of which (“three Hwa-Soons, three Yoonas, three Ma-Leu-Das, and three Sonmis” [188]) comprised the serving team of which she was a member, while a “human Seer” was appointed in charge (188). She later reveals how each of these stem-

types has been genetically modified or “genomed” (204) to add or emphasise desirable characteristics and remove features considered to be extraneous or detrimental to the fabricants’ assigned roles. Some are genetically altered so that they can stand for up to nineteen hours on end in performance of their duties (213), some are genomed to smile continuously at customers (192), and others are made immune to disease in order to rid the corpocracy’s streets of deceased and decaying bodies (332). These alterations are made in order to maximise fabricant productivity in specific industries and assist in the corpocracy’s efforts to render them objects rather than subjects – so that they become (in Somni~451’s words) “the ultimate organic machinery” (342).

It is also worth noting that two particular modifications stand out for an entirely different reason. Some fabricants have the ability to blush removed (230) and some of their memories are “genomed weak” (205). These modifications may well be an allusion to certain attitudes adopted by many Western consumers; for the objectification and consumption of non-human animals is indeed made easier if individuals feel no guilt or embarrassment about their consumptive habits or appetites, and “gaps” in memory (or “wilful blindness”) ensure that they are able continue to ignore the realities of how their meat is made. In this way, Mitchell presents his readers with an ironic reversal of characteristics, whereby the humans’ incapacity or refusal to feel shame, or to remember certain things, is projected onto the fabricants. Thus, the lack of individuality in both “animal” product and human consumer is represented.

Parallels are also easily drawn between Mitchell’s modified fabricants and the animal species bred for Western meat consumption. The genetic modification of fabricants to increase productivity mimics the ever widening scope of similar processes currently being employed or developed in the agricultural industry to increase the

“efficiency” of meat-producing “animals”; the development of the transgenic AquAdvantage salmon and featherless chickens are but two examples. In addition, the fabricants’ genetic alterations also represent the way in which these biotechnologies work to create a self-perpetuating Cartesian cycle of objectification and modification. That is, not only are the fabricants – and thus their “real-world” “animal” counterparts - viewed as objects or “machines” susceptible to genetic modification and cloning, but the actual alterations (and their subsequent replication) serve to enhance their objectification and mechanization, all for the purposes of increasing profitability.<sup>58</sup>

The power of genetic modification to objectify certain species is also critiqued via the descriptions of the “Keylims”: a transgenic class of fabricants. These creatures are genomed to exhibit “rabbit teeth” and their novel appearance instigates “long queues of nikonning [photo-taking] fabricant-spotters” (205). Genetic modification objectifies these bizarre human-animal hybrids, by making them visual fodder for the masses – they are simply there to be looked at, much like the “specimens” in biotech laboratories. The addition of “already-object” animal features and the cloning of these fabricants, ensures that they are viewed as a consumable “set” of objects, rather than as individual subjects.

In addition to these unusual hybrids, other fabricants have had their birthmarks eradicated or “genomed out” (204) and some stem-types have been genomed as miniature fabricants in order to be sold as “living dolls” (351). The corpocracy’s eradication of traits that would signify uniqueness and subjectivity in the fabricants is

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<sup>58</sup> This is also true of “animals” bred to be used in scientific experimentation. Many different “strains” of rat for example, are continually being developed for specific purposes and genetic variation within these strains must be “minimized” in order to “reduce experimental variability” (see Lynda Birke (2003) “Who – or What – are the Rats (and Mice) in the Laboratory” *Society and Animals* 11:3, pp.207-224).

also a means of mechanization and objectification. This, together with cloning, mirrors the formation of specialized “animal” breeds in the agricultural industry and the way in which genetic traits are selected, deselected, and/or cloned to achieve homogeneity. Mitchell’s creatures illustrate how the manipulation, exploitation, and consumption of bodies is made easier and acceptable when those bodies lack (or are purported to lack) individuality and subjectivity. More importantly, however, he demonstrates how the apparent lack of these qualities is actually created and cultivated by humans with an interest in exploitation, similar to the ways in which the denial of language operates, as discussed in the previous chapter. “Despite what purebloods strive so hard to convince themselves, fabricants’ minds differ greatly, even if their features and bodies do not” (191) says Sonmi~451 to her interviewer, alluding to this wilful cultivation of sameness and objectivity by Western producers and consumers. She continues: “To enslave an individual distresses the conscience, but to enslave a clone is merely like owning the latest mass-produced six wheeled ford” (191). The invocation of “ford” is particularly poignant here, for not only is the name synonymous with industrialization and capitalism, but it is also used as a simile for Sonmi~451 and her fellow fabricants which further alludes to our perception of the “animals” we enslave and consume as nothing more than mere machines. The omission of the capital letter in “ford” is also significant for it suggests the ubiquity of the object in the future – it is no longer a brand name or title, rather the name has become the word for the product itself. This is relevant in light of Sonmi’s use of “ford” with reference to fabricants – for they also have no name or title; they are instead branded and numbered according to their stem group. In order to contrast her invocation of “ford” and counter the way in which the corpocracy consumer’s view fabricants, Sonmi~451 replaces the notion of the machine with a

symbol of individuality and uniqueness: “In fact, all fabricants, even same-stem fabricants, are singular as snowflakes” she concludes (191).

The possession of uniqueness in cloned entities actually illuminates a real-world possibility - what critic Louise Economides describes as “cloning’s dirty little secret”: that organisms with identical genotypes may still express different phenotypes (626). Both Sonmi~451 and her co-worker Yoon~939’s “ascension” (meaning the development of individuality and autonomous behaviour over time) exposes this possibility,<sup>59</sup> as does Sonmi~451’s comet-shaped birthmark, for these are meant to have been successfully genomed out: “Every Medic who ever saw it xpressed bewilderment” [sic](Mitchell 204). Other “mutant” species also appear in Sonmi~451’s narrative. For example, she describes “once genomed moths [whose]... wings’ logos had mutated over generations into a chance syllabary” (345) and later, she feeds wild ducks who have survived polluted waterways because “rogue genomes” provided them with “a resilience lacking in their pureblood ancestors” (363). Economides argues that, along with Sonmi~451 herself, these creatures demonstrate a “persistence of uncertainty and innovation within the nature-culture continuum’s evolutionary development” (Economides 627) and they are evidence that the corpocracy lacks absolute control over their own biotechnological exploits. And, whilst it is eventually revealed that Sonmi~451’s ascension was aided by the corpocracy and her Orison is intended to be used as propaganda to ensure the enslavement of fabricants continues, Sonmi~451’s testimony eventually transforms into a series of teachings that are revered by many people in the distant future (as is described in *Cloud*

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<sup>59</sup> Whilst ascension might expose the possibility of genetic mutation, Sonmi-451 herself believes that ascension is not responsible for it, she states: “I believe ascension only frees what was suppressed by Soap [a type of drug]. Ascension doesn’t implant traits that were never present” (451).

*Atlas's* sixth narrative, "Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After"). In this sense, it is not just her body and mind, but also her narrative that exhibits "unexpected new mutations over time" (628).

In addition, the same citizens who come to revere Sonmi~451 are also the heirs to a post-apocalyptic world that is scarred by the aftermath of the former corpocracy's biotechnological ventures. In "Sloosha's Crossin'" - the narrative following Sonmi~451's orison, which centres on a small Hawaiian colony in the far distant future - Meronym, an outside visitor to the settlement, poignantly explains the disastrous results of biotechnology:

Now the Hole World is big but it weren't big 'nuff for that hunger what made  
Old'uns rip out the skies an' boil up the seas an' poison soil with crazed atoms an'  
donkey 'bout with rotted seeds so new plagues was borned an' babbits was  
freakbirthed... (Mitchell 286)

The language in this description encapsulates the chaos caused by the corpocracy's insatiable "hunger" (286) for "more food" and "more power" (286) and the biotechnologies responsible for feeding that hunger: the whole world has become the "Hole World" - a place burdened with emptiness and loss. Mitchell's use of verbs and adjectives that don't quite "fit" with their subjects - boiled seas, "borned" plagues, and "crazed atoms" are apocalyptic outcomes of the experimental combination of different genetic material and the unknown consequences of such experiments. A similarly dystopian tone is also present in the term for new-borns - "Babbits"; the words "rabbit" and "baby" have been amalgamated, creating an inter-species term for new "human" life. Meronym's words may therefore be interpreted as a powerful warning of the

unknown consequences of biotechnologies and a critique of the rapacious “hunger” that encourages their development and implementation.

A similar warning also comes via the antagonistic representation of other genetically modified organisms that feature in Sonmi~451’s narrative, and it is these representations in particular that parallel the conflict between the scientist-creator and experimental-creation found in earlier novels which critique the role and scope of science – namely, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) and H.G. Wells’s *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896). The “Norfolk pine-rubberwood hybrids” for example, that Sonmi~451 encounters during her journey to Pusan, are planted in “unerring rank-and-file” creating “the illusion that the forest was marching [...]”; it is as though they were “a regiment of millions” (344) she concludes. In addition, “clouds of saffron fertilizer” block out the horizon as she makes her way through the plantation and the “stagnant” air “reeks of insecticide” because the trees have been genomed to repel birds and bugs (344). Combined, these descriptions create a GM-ridden battlefield, where it is as if the plantation itself has declared war on the corpocracy, just as Victor Frankenstein’s Creature turned on his creator. Warren Montag argues Shelley’s work puts forward the notion that scientific and technological progress can introduce “separateness, division, and antagonism into the social world” (391); this and other descriptions in Sonmi~451 orison illustrate that the same is true for Mitchell’s novel. That trees in particular are presented in this way only amplifies the critique: genetic modification appears to have rendered bioforms that were once life-sustaining (through their provision of oxygen for humans and food and habitats for other creatures), into a transformative weapon-wielding enemy army. The uncertainty generated by genetic modification is also ominously portrayed in the narrative. Immediately before she encounters the

threatening plantation, Hae-Joo (Sonmi~451's "human" escort through the colonies) steers her away from a dangerous "miaowing two-headed rat" (332) and a genetically modified creature addresses her from a ceiling hatch: "Whether her webbed lips, crescent eyes and disconnected speech were genomed or mutated I could not be sure", Sonmi~451 responds (333). Mitchell's speculative portrayals of the consequences of genetic modification critique the unfettered and short-sighted use of such technology, and echo the statements made by Traci Warkentin in her discussion about the ethical use of this technology: "some humility and wonder is in order," she writes - "a respect for all that it still not known or understood about bodies and whole biological systems, and the findings of biological sciences which suggest their dynamic complexity and chaotic nature" (93).<sup>60</sup> Mitchell and Warkentin thus suggest that a "respect" for the unknown might well prevent catastrophic and irreversible damage to the aspects of nature we continually try to manipulate for human benefit.

Finally, the language employed with regards to biotechnological processes and their outcomes in *Cloud Atlas* defamiliarises the operation of hegemonic discourses or the "technological meta-discourse" (Benton and Short 2) used to naturalise biotechnological processes in the West. For example, the corpocracy refers to the modified clones as "fabricants" to proliferate the notion that they are manufactured entities, despite their being human clones. A label such as this removes any sense of individuality or uniqueness the creatures might possess and mirrors the use of words such as "stock" or "units" in relation to "animals" used for meat. In direct opposition, the citizens of Mitchell's corpocracy are referred to as "humans" or "purebloods", the

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<sup>60</sup> See "Dis/integrating animals: ethical dimensions of the genetic engineering of animals for human consumption" in *Animals in Society* (2006) 20: 82-102. Warkentin uses Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* as the basis for her discussion.

latter in particular, accentuates the hierarchy inherent in the language. Indeed when Hae-Joo refers to Sonmi~451 as a “person”, she regards this as a “compliment” (235). Furthermore, the names for individual fabricants do not connote individuality or uniqueness either, rather they are labelled by their stem-type and allocated a number, such as “Sonmi~451” or “Yoona~939”. This is similar to the way in which “animals” are labelled, physically branded, and/or tagged in the agricultural industry – in the paddock, pen, and in the laboratory. Information such as the breed, the owner’s name, the “animal’s” age, a number, and in some cases a patent or trademark may be used to create a generic label in order to avoid connotations of subjectivity or individuality, such as the AquAdvantage Salmon mentioned previously.

A multi-layered and potent critique of objectifying language relating to biotechnology is also found in a statement made by a “pureblood” mother to her inquisitive son. During a visit to the Papa Songs restaurant where Sonmi~451 works, the boy asks why some servers look exactly alike. His mother then explains that fabricants are “grown in the same wombtank, like radishes in [his] biology class” (192). In this one sentence, Mitchell shows how the language of “nature” can be used to simultaneously objectify animal (or animalized) others, and naturalize the biotechnological processes that utilize those objectified others. Firstly, Mitchell’s comparison of fabricants to “radishes” insinuates that they are non-sentient beings or “lower” botanical life forms (in much the same way as Faber depicts his vodsels, as discussed in the previous chapter). But the utilization of botanical imagery in this context also demonstrates the ability of language to simplify and naturalise these biotechnological exploits and this assists in their seamless integration into the meat production process and consequently, the lives of consumers. The use of the term

“wombtanks” further emphasises this critique by undermining the “pureblood” mother’s use of this imagery. The juxtaposition of “womb” and “tank” which fuses the inanimate with the notion of “natural” gestation, illustrates the conflict inherent in the biotechnological mechanization and objectification of nature.<sup>61</sup> Finally, Mitchell’s “wombtank” also alludes to another facility that has woven its way into the discourse of meat production – a facility also credited with “growing” “animal” bodies: “factory farming” is just as dichotomous, and heavily reliant on notions of “the natural” in its perpetuation.

### **Factory “Farming”**

...if you travel a hundred miles along one of Britain’s motorways which afford a view of our historic farmlands [...] it is unlikely you will spot a single pig or chicken, although in Britain’s supermarkets their union-jack bedecked joints and carcasses line the shelves in their millions. What has happened to farming, and where have all the livestock gone?

- Andrew Johnson, *Factory Farming* (1991, p.3)

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<sup>61</sup> Mitchell’s “womb-tank” also alludes to the many ways in which industrialized agriculture manipulates the female reproductive systems of certain species. See Lynda Birke’s *Feminism, Animals, and Science: The Naming of the Shrew*, Buckingham and Bristol PA: Open University Press, 1994 for an in-depth analysis.

Do you know where the light is?

- Michel Faber, *Under The Skin* (2000, p.166)

Following the “accidental” arrival of the first intensive indoor farming operation in the United States in 1923,<sup>62</sup> “factory farms” or “CAFOs” (confined animal feeding operations) have long since become “the norm” in animal agriculture (Novek, 221). If an absence of chickens or hogs in the countryside isn’t enough to convince, recent statistics can alleviate the doubt: according to recent (conservative) estimates, approximately 450 billion land “animals” are “reared” in these operations each year (Foer 209). Due to their size, structure, and the use of biotechnological developments designed to increase productivity and profit (such as pesticides and genetically modified feed),<sup>63</sup> these massive, intensive “farms” are able to operate without stopping, 365 days a year, endlessly churning out “animals” destined for the slaughterhouse. This and the continuing consolidation of smaller farm lots into large scale operations and the subsequent acquisition of these by wealthy corporations have inevitably led to a great reduction in the number of “traditional” farming operations or family-run plots. Critics Stull and Broadway poignantly note that small and independent producers might even be considered “an endangered species” (27) in the increasingly industrialized agricultural landscape.

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<sup>62</sup> In that year, the Steele family of Oceanview, Delmarva received an order of five hundred chicks instead of fifty. The family decided to keep the birds inside during winter and using a new feed supplement containing vitamins A and D the birds survived so they continued raising them in this manner. Ten years later, the Delmarva Peninsula was the “poultry capital of the world” (Foer, *Eating Animals*, p.105).

<sup>63</sup> Some types of feed for example, have been modified to contain antibiotics and hormones to assist growth and maturation (See Kennedy, RF. “From Farms to Factories: Pillaging the Commons”. *The CAFO Reader* p.203)

However, despite the rise of the factory farm and the fact that the majority of meat available in supermarkets and fast food outlets now comes from “animals” raised in these intensive conditions, the majority of consumers remain in the dark about what exactly goes on behind closed doors. What *does* go on is a far cry from nostalgic notions of the free-range “animals” raised on Old MacDonald’s farm. Liver abscesses,<sup>64</sup> fungal infections and parasite infestation,<sup>65</sup> sickness-induced cannibalism,<sup>66</sup> lack of sunlight,<sup>67</sup> teeth cutting,<sup>68</sup> tail docking, debeaking, and suffocation,<sup>69</sup> are just some of the realities of factory farming. One author describes his visit to a mass-confinement hog farm as “a bedlam of squealing, chain rattling and horrible roaring” where straw-deprived hogs chew on bars and chains or “just lie there like broken beings” (Scully 23). Another writes that “the pigs remain in a state of dying until they’re slaughtered” (Tietz 111). The conditions for factory farmed broiler chickens are much the same. Up to thirty percent of chickens suffer “severe lameness and swelling” and days spent standing on their own faecal matter causes breast blisters and foot-pad dermatitis (Potts 155). In Britain alone about 45 million chicks die before reaching “market weight” (155) due to the harsh conditions of these intensive operations. That these realities remain largely unexposed is due in part to the hidden location of these meat factories, the closed and impenetrable design, and the strict enforcement of laws and regulations which prevent the entry into or recording of such operations. These factors, coupled with euphemistic language and imagery that still touts these facilities as “farms” and dying “animals” as “vulnerable production units” (Imhoff 74) ensures that welfare of the “animals” inside

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<sup>64</sup> See Rollin, Bernard E. “Farm Factories: The End of Animal Husbandry” *The CAFO Reader*. p8.

<sup>65</sup> See Tietz, Jeff. “Boss Hog: The Rapid Rise of Industrial Swine” *The CAFO Reader*, p111.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, p110.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>68</sup> See Scully, Matthew. “Fear Factories: The Case for Compassionate Conservatism”. *The CAFO Reader*, p 24.

<sup>69</sup> See Johnson, *Factory Farming*, p30.

these factories are by in large ignored by those demanding cheap meat products. Through the bleak descriptions of dark, dirty, and crammed “animal” holding and “fattening” or “preparation” pens, and his hybrid protagonist’s response to these conditions, Michel Faber prompts his readers to think about factory farming by imagining the horror they would feel if such methods were applied to humans.

The physical distance between factory farms and the consumers that sustain them is portrayed in Faber’s text. Ablach Farm – the site of confinement, preparation, and slaughter of the vodsels in the narrative – is located in back country Scotland where the roads and tracks are “deserted” (101), the farm boundary backs onto a forest, and a mountain range and sea are found close by. The placement of the facility away from the eyes of the public is true to the way Western factory farms are intentionally located far from public view. The idea that “natural” features such as the sea, the forest, and the mountains aid in the “hiding” of the facility also reflects the way nostalgic images of farms mask the realities of industrialized agriculture. “For most of us” writes critic Andrew Johnson, “the word ‘farm’ evokes an image of a plain but dignified dwelling set in a patterned landscape of neatly tended fields; green with peacefully grazing stocks, brown with clean new furrows, or golden with the rippling wealth of harvest...” (3). Thus, the natural “barriers” to sight in Faber’s novel mirror the nostalgic images of nature consumers prefer to conjure when they consider the origins of the animals they eat. In addition, the reference to “derelict cattle sheds [...] eerie with emptiness, their floors moated with a slurry of rainwater and the compost of cows long gone”, the “old granary” and the stable with “inanimate” contents (97-98), evoke the decline in “traditional” farms which may be well be considered an “endangered species” in the increasingly industrialized agricultural landscape (Stull and Broadway 27): it is telling

and ironic that these disused apparatus are also used to disguise the realities of the operations at Ablach Farm.

In addition, the “human” owners of Ablach Farm have gone to great lengths to hide the actual enclosures where vodsels are kept. They are situated on the lowest level of the subterranean plant, four levels underground. In contrast, and providing yet another nod to the lack in consumer understanding of the meat production chain, the workers’ kitchen and recreation hall are located on the “shallowest” level (109). The entry into the plant is also hidden. The facility is only accessible via a lift shaft located in the corner of a ground floor barn which is concealed inside a “massive steel drum”, ironically embossed with “a rusted and faded image of a cow and a sheep” (109). The idea that venturing inside these hidden facilities would “open our eyes” to the realities of meat production is made disconcertingly obvious in the description of the lift shaft opening: the concealed seam parts “like a vertical eyelid” (109) before enveloping its passengers and transporting them underground.

As well as portraying the physical distance between factory farms and the Western consumer, Faber also represents consumer compliance in the maintenance of this distance. He highlights this complicity through protagonist Isserley’s response to the vodsels’ environment. Despite being responsible for the hunting and capture of the vodsels and their introduction to Ablach Farm, Isserley intentionally avoids visiting the “specimens” once she has delivered them to her fellow workers. At one point in the novel, following the recapture of a group of vodsels set free by Amliss Vess, she “peevisly” bangs upon the elevator “UP” button when she realizes she is going down further in the plant than she wants to: the Processing Hall and the vodsels pens, we learn, were “exactly where Isserley didn’t want to go” (111). Despite her successful avoidance

of the vodsel pens for some time, Isserley eventually finds herself in the depths of the plant after feebly accepting Amliss' request to join him. It is here, during Isserley's first encounter of the vodsels in their confined environment (she has only seen the pens once before, after they were newly constructed, and before any vodsels had been captured [168]) where Faber's description of the factory farm is at its most powerful. Upon reaching the bottom level of the vodsel processing plant, Amliss and Isserley are immediately greeted by almost complete darkness, "as if they had been dropped into a narrow fissure between two strata of compacted rock with only a child's faltering flashlight to guide them" (166); the stench of "fermenting urine and faeces" also permeates the space (166). Other than a few "feeble infra-red bulbs", all Isserley can see are the "firefly glints of a swarm of eyes" swaying everywhere in front of them (166). Amliss then poignantly asks: "Do you know where the light is?" (166). Here, Mitchell encapsulates the contemporary relationship between the human subject, the animal object, and the factory farm in one interrogative passage. The darkness symbolises the distance between the three and the gap in consumer knowledge about factory farming practises, whilst the visibility of the eyes allude to the fact that despite this gap, the consumer is well aware of the animal's existence. Finally, Amliss' question symbolises the apparent ease with which this distance and gap might be remedied – the light or "information" is not hard to find. Thus, "do you know where the light is?" can be interpreted as a question directed towards consumers, and asks of them not only whether they are aware of what goes on inside factory farms, but whether or not they are intentionally ignoring those realities.

The question comes at a timely point in the novel, for what follows is a description eerily reminiscent of factory farm conditions. As Isserley turns on the light, a "flood of

harsh light” fills the room and she begins to feel claustrophobic due to the tight and cramped conditions created to maximise the number of vodsels (168). During the excavation of this, the deepest level, she notes:

...the men had burrowed out no more of the solid Triassic rock than they absolutely had to [...]. The vodsel enclosures, a corona of linked pens all along the walls, took up almost the entire floor space; there was just enough room left down the middle for a walkway. (168).

Isserley is then confronted by the grimy and cramped cages, “the wire mesh soiled, masked in places with the dark putty of faeces and other unidentifiable matter” (168) and the “stench and looming density of flesh, the humid ambience of recycled breath” (168-169). Chemical intervention and the doctoring of animal feed that occurs within CAFOs are also referred to. The monthlings are described as glistening with the “dark diarrhoea of ripeness [...]. Nothing which might cause the slightest harm to human digestion survived in their massive guts; every foreign microbe had been purged and replaced with only the best and most well-trusted bacteria” (169). “Real-world” counterparts for each of these descriptions can be found in various public accounts made by visitors to Western factory farms: lack of sunlight, cramped conditions, and large amounts of dirt and faeces (and the odours that accompany them) are all commonly cited observations made by the few who have entered into such facilities.<sup>70</sup> Isserley therefore stands in for the consumer, and these descriptions begin to “fill the gap” in consumer knowledge about intensive farming operations. The descriptions of

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<sup>70</sup> For examples see Scully “Fear Factories” The Case for Compassionate Conservatism – For Animals” in Imhoff, Daniel (Ed.) *The CAFO Reader: The Tragedy of Industrial Animal Factories*. Healdsburg, CA: Watershed Media, 2010. 15-28, Potts, Annie *Chicken* (2012) p155, and Tietz, Jeff. “Boss Hog: The Rapid Rise of Industrial Swine” in Imhoff, Daniel (Ed.) *The CAFO Reader: The Tragedy of Industrial Animal Factories*. Healdsburg, CA: Watershed Media, 2010. 109-124.

the vodsels' close confinement is intensely provocative for the reader in that they must picture, not chickens, hogs, or cattle in these dire conditions, but fellow human beings; a very intense kind of horror is generated by this substitution of species. That a non-exaggerated evocation of factory farming methods, albeit applied to humans, can create such feelings of disgust and horror shows that our continued acceptance of those methods in reality is greatly problematic.

The power of intensive confinement to further objectify "animals" and to illicit feelings of horror is also made evident in Faber's description of the vodsels. As Isserley walks around the enclosures, she sees that:

...monthlings were huddled together in a mound of fast-panting flesh, the divisions between one muscle-bound body and the next difficult to distinguish, the limbs confused. Hands and feet spasmed at random, as if a co-ordinated response was struggling vainly to emerge from a befuddled collective organism. Their fat little heads were identical, swaying in a cluster like polyps of an anemone, blinking stupidly in the sudden light. (169)

This potent description demonstrates how the close confinement of "animals" can cause them to be viewed as one immense meat-producing apparatus that eliminates any understanding of them as subjects or individuals in order to maximise profit. The lack of space and large number of "animals" causes them to seem "identical" and the removal of subjectivity renders them, collectively, "befuddled", "confused" and "stupid" (169), and thus unworthy of consideration by those profiteering from their objectification. In the same way that biotechnology can "doubly" objectify nonhuman animals, so too can intensive confinement. For not only are the "animals" viewed as objects that *can* be intensively reared in close confinement and away from their "natural" surroundings, but

the conditions inside the factory farm *add* to their objectification, by creating one collective Cartesian “machine”.

Finally, just as the objectifying and euphemistic language concerning biotechnology was featured in *Cloud Atlas*, the camouflaging rhetoric or “double-speak” (Glenn 64) employed in regards to intensive farming is represented in Faber’s *Under the Skin*. The objectifying terms assigned to “animals” in the meat production industry are reflected in the labels given to the vodsels Isserley captures who are renamed according to each stage of the meat production process they encounter. Hunted vodsels, for example, are referred to as “specimens” (1); “transitionals” (169) are named so because they have not long been castrated and had their tongues removed; and when they have reached “monthling” status (169), the vodsels are considered ready for “processing” (216). These labels mimic the way certain “animal” species are defined and objectified by terms such as “stock”, “units”, “breeders”, “growers” and so forth inside the CAFO.

In addition, the power of language to mask the realities of factory farm operations is revealed through Isserley’s euphemistic descriptions of the acts carried out at Ablach Farm. For example, the docking of the vodsels’ tongues that occurs on their arrival, is twice described by Isserley as the vodsels’ being “seen to” (170,174). The names of the areas within Ablach Farm also obscure the occurrences within them: the “Transit Level” is where the vodsels are castrated and have their tongues cut out, and the “Processing Hall” is where the slaughter and butchering of vodsels takes place. And Ablach Farm, is of course, not a working farm in the traditional sense at all; the name is therefore a guise for the underground meat-producing and slaughterhouse facility. Here, Faber references many of the terms found in factory farm discourse, such as “grower sheds”

and “barns” for the buildings containing thousands of animals in close confinement, “sow stalls” or “gestation crates” for pens so small the sows within them cannot turn around, and the use of the name “factory *farm*” itself. These euphemisms and camouflaging labels are apt representations of the language used by the Western “animal” farming industry to both disguise the true occurrences inside CAFOs, and naturalise the existence of such industrial, mechanized practices.

### **The Slaughterhouse: Distance versus Entanglement**

Next to the market-places that I spake of stand meat markets, whither be brought not only all sorts of herbs and the fruits of trees, with bread, but also fish, and all meat. But first the filthiness and ordure thereof is clean washed away in the running river without the city in places appointed meet for the same purpose. From thence the beasts be brought in, killed, and clean washed by the hands of their bondmen. For they permit not their free citizens to accustom themselves to the killing of beasts, lest affection of our nature, by little and little to decay and perish.”

- Thomas More, *Utopia* (1992) [1516], p. 73)

When empty and not in use, a slaughterhall looks much like any other industrial workplace. The cleaners have piled the solid waste into bins. The water has washed away all trace of blood and purified the air. The ceramic tiles on the walls and the cement floor shine from their final rinse. If one did

not already know, the machines and the various pieces of equipment would give little idea of the kind of work that has gone on here. To disturb the calm, it would be necessary to name each object.

- Noëlie Vialles, *Animal to Edible* (1994, p.94)

Provided the “animals” destined for the omnivore’s table do not die within the confines of a factory farm,<sup>71</sup> or during transportation to the abattoir stockyards (as many often do),<sup>72</sup> they will inevitably meet their end in one of the most pivotal institutions at work in the lives of Western consumers: the modern-day slaughterhouse. Here, behind closed doors and windowless walls, “human” bodies operate a series of pulleys, chains, hooks, knives, and conveyer belts in order to transform living “animal” bodies into processed and packaged homogeneous consumables - as many as possible, as quickly as possible, and far from the eyes of the urban populace.<sup>73</sup> Some sixty billion animals are herded through slaughterhouse doors each year in order to ensure that meat products are a “foregone conclusion” rather than an “unpredictable and costly rarity” (Lee 3) for many Western consumers. These “gigantic machine[s]” (3) are responsible for the preparation of almost every meat product found on contemporary supermarket shelves and takeaway menus, not to mention a myriad of “animal” by-products: from Chicken

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<sup>71</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, in Britain alone approximately 45 million chickens die in intensive confinement before reaching “market weight” (Potts, *Chicken*, p.155).

<sup>72</sup> In *Slaughterhouse: The Shocking Story of Greed, Neglect, and Inhumane Treatment inside the U.S. Meat Industry*, author Gail Eisnitz describes how she is told by one hog slaughterhouse worker that “frozen” (hogs who die in winter during transportation to the abattoir from Canada) are a common occurrence (p132). Many also die in the summer months due to the heat and the over-crowding of the stock trucks (p101).

<sup>73</sup> This was not always the case. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (at the time Upton Sinclair wrote *The Jungle*) slaughterhouses offered guided tours to show the public due to the pride taken in emergent systems of mass industrial production. Later, slaughterhouse became guarded “like military compounds” and it was made “almost impossible to gain access” once the grim experiences of the rest of the century produced anxiety about the possible applications of these systems. (See Coe, *Dead Meat*. New York, NY: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1996.)

McNuggets to Big Mac burgers, fertiliser to fragrances, and glues to shoes, the products of slaughter can be easily located in the environment around us. It is the “how” of slaughter that is significantly harder to pin down.

Developed in order to satiate the voracious Western capitalist’s appetite, it is no wonder that the industrialization of the slaughter process has been closely linked to Henry Ford’s revolutionary automobile production lines of the early nineteenth century.<sup>74</sup> Both of these facilities appropriated raw materials and turned them into consumable products by following a “serialized logic” wherein each worker was assigned an isolated task as part of a large and complex operation in order to minimise costs and maximise productivity (Lee 3). Yet the stark difference between Ford’s assembly lines and the slaughterhouse process, was that rather than combine materials in order to *create* a product, the abattoir “started with something highly complex and reduced it to something simple” (4); the “animal” was essentially *deconstructed*, piece by piece, into consumable foodstuffs and by-products.

Despite the prominence of meat on Western plates, the process of slaughter and the ways in which the slaughterhouse has become so firmly entrenched in the landscape of Western food production are not a prominent feature on the critical agenda of most consumers. As Nick Fiddes observes in *Meat: A Natural Symbol*: “That animals are killed for humans to eat meat is obvious to the point of banality. However, the inherent conquest is rarely discussed overtly in the context of food provision” (44). In fact, slaughter is essential to whether meat is considered edible or not. “Animals” that have died naturally or as a result of accident or sickness are usually seen as “unfit” to eat

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<sup>74</sup> Ford claimed to have instigated his famous assembly line process after seeing the Chico meat-processing system in action. See Paula Young Lee, *Meat, Modernity, and the Slaughterhouse*, p.3, Shukin, *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Terms* p.97, Carol Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, p.77-81.

(Vialles 5); the “animal” must be killed for the purpose of consumption. In the same way that factory farming, genetic engineering, and the unstable boundary between the “human” and the “animal” are largely omitted from the Western carnist conversation, the slaughterhouse too, despite its integral function, is often left uninterrogated and the reason for that omission is one and the same: it is difficult to critique something that is perpetually in hiding. “To enable us to eat meat without the killers of the killing, without even – insofar as the smell, the manure, and the other components of organic life are concerned – the animals themselves”, notes critic Timothy Pachirat: “this is the logic that maps contemporary industrialized slaughterhouses ...” (3). The violence of slaughter must be hidden to “legitimize” and perpetuate “animal” slaughter on the exponential scale that is needed to satisfy profiteers and to meet the public demand for meat and other animal products (Elder et al 197).

Consequently, when we do venture inside the slaughterhouse, we usually must enter “through the writings of someone else” (Adams *The Sexual Politics of Meat* 78). Fictional narratives that portray such sites – whatever their main intention in doing so – provide us with that opportunity, sometimes in ways that can be more vivid, more incisive, or more provocative than non-fictional accounts. By pulling back the curtain on the “disassembly” line, they expose the aspects of meat production that for so long have remained “off the table” for discussion. Just as the well-maintained physical and linguistic distance allows biotechnologies and factory farming to remain in hiding, so too, does the location and language of the slaughterhouse. The utilisation of this distance to continually deny the components of slaughter – the “animals”, the slaughterhouse workers, and the violence itself, is brought to the fore in all three of the fictional narratives I have selected for analysis. The slaughterhouse as a site where the welfare

of “humans” and “animals” becomes entangled is also foregrounded in the texts, which contributes to the erosion of the boundary between “subject” and “object”, and further destabilises the species hierarchy upon which Western meat production and consumption so heavily relies.

The seclusion of slaughterhouse operations and the disconnection this facilitates, is portayed by Faber through his description of the slaughterhouse location and environs at Ablach Farm. In *Under the Skin*, the slaughter and butchering process occurs on Earth (far from the actual planet on which vodsels meat is consumed) and it takes place “three storeys below the ground” (210) on the Transit Level of the facility - there is nothing lower than this except the vodsels themselves. This subterranean location mimics the physical distance between slaughter and the Western consumer. The progression into the depths of the earth, or “all those arm’s-lengths under the ground” (210) as Faber poignantly describes, also connotes burial - both of the realities of slaughter and of literal bodies, as well as alluding to the violent or “hellish” aspects of the abattoir, and reminds the reader that the consumption of meat cannot occur “without the death of an animal” (Adams *The Sexual Politics of Meat* 66).

These “hellish” aspects are again alluded to in the dream Isserley has whilst driving towards the ruins of a medieval abbey where she often rests. She begins dreaming of the “ocean of sky” above the ruins before slipping down into a “deeper level”, “through a treacherous crust of pulverulent earth” before landing in the “subterranean hell of the Estates” (Faber 117) (a housing project on her home planet where once lived). Here, she visualises the dark centre of a factory, and is repulsed by a “giant concrete crater” filled with rotting plant matter, where “baggy diver’s suits enslimed in black muck” were attached to hundreds of tubes and reeled in by

“indistinct” mechanical agents (118). ““This,”” a guide explains, “is where we make oxygen for those above” (118); at this revelation, she screams herself awake. This portrayal of oxygen production is a powerful reflection of the process of industrialized slaughter. Isserley’s imagining of the dark and grim realities and the hidden “dirt” and death required in order to make oxygen for the public reflects the hidden death and other disturbing facets involved in Western industrialized meat production.

The removal of slaughter and meat processing from quotidian experience is also portrayed in Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas*. In the dystopian future described in Sonmi~451’s orison, the slaughter and butchery of retired fabricants occurs aboard Papa Song’s “golden arks” (356). Instead of transporting fabricants to Hawaii at the cessation of their servitude (as the fabricants have been lead to believe), these huge vessels file fabricants through turnstiles and kill them one by one, before rendering them into biomatter for biotechnological use and meat products for the corpocracy’s consumers. Disguised as a maintenance worker and aided by pureblood Hae-Joo, Sonmi~451 witnesses the production line herself when she descends into the aptly-named “underbelly” of one of these floating facilities (357). These features are comparable with Faber’s narrative - again slaughter and butchery occur within the depths of a hidden location and the imagery of the underworld is also invoked, though the latter is far more explicit in Mitchell’s text: the blood-soaked workers on the slaughterhouse production line appear to Sonmi~451 as “sadistic visions of hell”, or “devils” wielding scissors and swordsaws (359). Such imagery is in direct contrast to biblical representations of the ark as a place of safety or preservation. Finally, the ark’s primary purpose as a mode of transport also alludes to the evasiveness of slaughter and butcher

in that Papa Songs “slaughtership” (360) can continually move around to elude the public - and critical - gaze.

The role that euphemistic language plays in masking the realities of slaughter is also represented in the texts. In *Under the Skin*, terms such as the “Transit Level” and the “Processing Hall” hide the realities of what actually occurs in those spaces in much the same way that real-world phrases such as “meat packing” or “freezing works” do.<sup>75</sup> “Transit” refers to both the arrival of the vodsels and the removal of their genitalia and tongues, and their preparation for shipping once they have been “processed”; the latter, of course, refers to the site of their slaughter and butchering. In addition, the apparatus in which they are both sterilised and later killed, is called the “Cradle” (211); constructed from various pieces of farm equipment, it gleams like a “giant gravy boat” (211) and is as far from the association of birth and nurturing as can be. Mitchell’s “golden ark” in *Cloud Atlas*, provides a similar contradiction by hiding images of killing and butchery with its suggestion of prosperity, rebirth, and the notion of a momentous journey.

Furthermore, the way that the killing floor and the slaughter itself are described by certain characters in the texts also references the way consumers currently talk about, or rather “around”, the practice of “animal” slaughter. In *Under the Skin*, for example, Isserley continues to adopt euphemistic rhetoric when she asks to witness the slaughtering process despite having acquired a kind of “blood-lust” after being sexually assaulted by a vonsel hitchhiker: “...are there any ... any *monthlings* still to be ... processed?”, she asks co-worker Unser (original emphasis), going on to say, “I’d love to

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<sup>75</sup> “Freezing works” or “the freezer” are common terms for the slaughter/processing facilities in New Zealand.

see [...] to see the way you do it. The end product.” (216). The same euphemistic language comes through in the passage that depicts the men bringing in a vodsels to be processed: “The men merely nudged him with their flanks whenever he seemed about to stumble or deviate. They accompanied him: that was the word. They accompanied him to the Cradle” (217). Isserley’s commentary draws attention to the calculated adoption of euphemistic language with regards to the slaughterhouse and how this language nullifies the violent deaths that occur inside its walls.

In D’Lacey’s *Meat*, a lengthy description of the slaughtering process reflects the use of similar language. The Chosen are prodded with electrical rods to “encourage” them down from the stock trucks (15); the slitting of “animals”’ throats so they will bleed out becomes “a cut” to “carotid arteries and the trachea” for “exsanguination” (17); when the “animals” refuse to die quickly or they regain consciousness during the process, twitching is referred to as a mere “residual impulse(s)” (73) which are regarded as simply “weak” areas of the chain (72) and so on. The omission of any references to stress, pain, or death itself, leave obvious and questionable gaps in the description. Faber and Mitchell also contrast similar calculated euphemisms with potent and visceral descriptions of slaughter. Following Isserley’s request to see a vodsels being “processed”, she watches Unser as he “slashed open the arteries in the vodsels’ neck, then stood back as a jet of blood gushed out, steaming hot and startlingly red...” (219). And in *Cloud Atlas*, Sonmi-451, watches a fabricant be fitted with a helmet contraption – a piece of equipment usually associated with safety and the preservation of life – only to be killed by a bolt to the head. Sonmi watches the fabricant: “her eyeballs rolled backwards [...]. Her corpse tapdanced...” after which “blood-soaked”

workers “peeled sin, offcut hands and legs, sliced of meat, spooned organs...” further down the production line (359).

The intentional avoidance by the majority of consumers of both “animal” slaughter itself and critical discussion about the practice, is also represented in the texts. In Faber’s novel, protagonist Isserley avoids the slaughtering facilities just as she avoids the vodsels - only the trauma of assault at the hands of vodsels prompts her to vengefully seek out the killing floor. In *Cloud Atlas*, Mitchell highlights consumer denial of slaughter and butchery via Sonmi~451’s response to the human workers aboard Papa Song’s ark: “Purebloods played cards, ate noodles, smoked, sent mail, jokes, engaged in ordinary life. How could they know what happened in the underbelly and just ... sit there, as if their vessel was a sardine-processor?” she asks (361). As well as referencing consumer denial of “animal” slaughter, the passage also reaffirms the species hierarchy underpinning it through its reference to sardine processing with the insinuation that those creatures are of a lower rank than others. This denial is also reflected in the response Sonmi~451’s interviewer gives upon hearing the truth about Papa Song’s infamous “golden arks”: “Murdering servers to supply dineries with food and Soap ... no. The charge is ...preposterous”, remarks the interviewer, “it must, *must* have been a Union ... set, created to brainwash you. No such ... ‘slaughtership’ could be permitted to exist...” (360).

Finally, in D’Lacey’s narrative, the prophet John Collins explains that the catalyst in his transformation from meat-eater to vegetarian was his realisation that “killing” had to take place in order for that meat to exist:

The first thing I realised was that to make meat, you actually have to kill something. I can't imagine why it took me so long to work that one simple thing out. You have to raise this living thing, feed it, breed it, fatten it. Then you have to find a way of killing it and cutting it up. I wondered about that for a long, long time. How do you kill something? Do you use a knife? Do you hit it with a club? Shoot it? All this I had to investigate purely in my imagination (131).

This passage directly addresses the distance between Western consumers and the slaughtering process. The mention of using one's "imagination" to investigate the realities of slaughter also invites the reader to use D'Lacey's fictional text to help prompt their own "imagining" of the process.

Whilst a physical and linguistic distance might be enough to keep consumers from entering inside the slaughterhouse walls, the same cannot be said for those who must work within them. To further undermine the orchestrated separation between "animal product" and "human consumer", the authors portray the slaughterhouse as a site of human and "animal" entanglement, where both humans and "animals" are effectively disciplined as result of the layout and structure of the slaughterhouse environs. Confining slaughtering to an enclosed space simultaneously satisfies the need to "monitor, control, and if necessary, punish" (Vialles 22) – both the "animals" which are set to meet their death within its walls, and the humans responsible for those deaths. In this sense, the slaughterhouse may be viewed in Foucauldian terms, as "a site of disciplinary power (and domination) where a multitude of bodies are rendered docile" (Thierman 103).

The way in which the layout of the slaughterhouse facilitates the surveillance of workers by others in positions of authority is evoked in D'Lacey's *Meat* in particular. We learn that "chain manager" Torrance keeps an eye on MMP employees from his "elevated observation box" situated at the top of the steel stairs which run above the processing chain (2). From here, he asks Shanti what the speed of the chain is and is able to shout commands or encouragement to the group of workers below (2-3). Other supervisors at MMP are able to survey workers from the top of an observation balcony inside the slaughtering facility: a small office "with glass windows all around" allows those in power to keep a watchful eye over the plant (244). The Panopticon-like design of the killing facility effectively "disciplines" employees in the way that it facilitates the constant surveillance or "hierarchical observation" (Thierman 103) of slaughterhouse labourers by those that profit from their work.<sup>76</sup> By presenting the slaughterhouse layout in this realistic fashion, D'Lacey puts on display the means by which "coercion and a consequent docility" is achieved by the surveillance of one group over another (103).<sup>77</sup> The fact that both humans *and* animals are disciplined in in this way is also suggested via D'Lacey's description of the how the Chosen are surveyed by MMP employees: their captive environment parallels that of the slaughterhouse workers. The access gates to the Chosen are "high and spiralled with barbed wire" and the fields are surrounded by "impenetrable hedges" (34). Most significantly, "wooden towers where stockmen could observe, count and keep the herds secure" are situated around

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<sup>76</sup> Designed by Jeremy Bentham in the late eighteenth century, and used by Foucault as a metaphor for disciplinary institutions, the Panopticon is a building with a central watchtower that allows one observer to survey many subjects without being seen themselves. This ensures the subjects act as though they are constantly under surveillance (that is, they are self-disciplined) because they are unable to know whether or not they are, in fact, being observed. See Bentham, Jeremy *The Panopticon Writings*. Božovič, Miran (Ed.) London: Verso, 1995 and Foucault, Michel *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

<sup>77</sup> See also Timothy Pachirat's discussion of the operation surveillance in the slaughterhouse his detailed first-hand account of slaughtering facilities provided in *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight* (2011).

the perimeter in a direct reflection of the observation towers at the processing facility (34).<sup>78</sup>

Finally, the authors also portray the slaughterhouse as a site of the entanglement of human and “animal” welfare, by showing how workers within this industrialized arena are constantly objectified. Both “animal” and human bodies are made “the objects/targets of power and are thereby subjected, used and transformed” (Thierman 2010). Again, distance and language, the familiar culprits, appear once more as the key players in the objectifying process. And again, the entanglement of humans and nonhuman animals in this way serves to compromise the strength of that so-called “binary” relationship and calls into question the hierarchy which relies on their division. Not only are the “animals” and the violence of slaughter made visible to their readers, but the “the human beings who are also integrally enmeshed in the web of relationships created by our eating habits” are also introduced (King 184-185); for so often, “to the extent that we do not see them, or the conditions in which they work, we act as if they are but instruments to serve our own ends” (185).

In *Meat*, the slaughterhouse workers are continuously framed in terms of their value or productivity. For example, at the start of the novel the “stunner’s” role is described in detail and we are told that, psychologically, “it was one of the toughest jobs on the chain; the most damaging to the mind” (D’Lacey 3). For this reason, the position is rotated and stunners take a week on the gun, followed by three weeks on other stations. Importantly, whilst a break is considered “mandatory for the sake of sanity”,

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<sup>78</sup> In *Cloud Atlas*, the spatial layout of Papa Song’s restaurant is not particularly reminiscent of Bentham’s Panopticon, however the notion that the fabricants are continuously under surveillance so that they remain disciplined workers is very clear. The fabricants’ supervisors are called “Seers”.

we are also informed that “more crucially”, the break is enforced “to maintain high productivity” (3). Stunner Wheelie Patterson’s story echoes this viewpoint. The young man works two weeks at the stunning station and gradually becomes more violent towards the “stock”. However, from the management’s point of view, Wheelie “had done nothing worse than retard the factory’s chain speed and cost them money” (5); “stockmen and slaughtermen,” we are told, “were a valuable commodity” (3). It is because of this, and Shanti’s ability to “wipe out cattle like a disease” that he is deemed an “asset” to the town (88).

In addition, the separation of tasks at the MMP plant is described early on in the novel; we know there are “filers” (those responsible for herding the cattle into the single file chute before slaughter)(15), “stunners” (4), “bleeders” (17), “skinners” and “gutters” (18), those responsible for “quartering, hanging, and boning” (18) as well as “chain managers” which oversee the whole process (4). The mechanical nature of their labour is also referred to: stunner Wheelie Patterson “worked the head of the chain like he was one of the machines” (4) and Rick Shanti is deemed “Ice Pick Rick” because he is “smooth and cool” in his work (6). The terms D’Lacey uses here not only demonstrate the mechanization or objectification of the workers by virtue of their alienated tasks, but the fact that they become known for the task that they perform reiterates the objectification process. Their individuality is removed from them when they are referred to in this manner, and labels such as these also reflect the similar terms used with regards to certain “animal” breeds or uses (for example “broiler” chickens, and “layer” hens).

These descriptions show how the Cartesian notion of the “animal-machine” might be extended to encompass the persons working within the slaughterhouse too:

those on the “disassembly” line become part of the “roaring, vibrating totality that has come to encompass not only the knives, hooks, and machines that kill, rip, and tear [...] but also the human arms, legs, and hands that operate these devices” (Pachirat 138). Their consignment to “stationary and hyper-repetitive piecework” (Shukin 87), causes them to become quasi-mechanised within the overarching slaughter-machine. The entanglement of “the human” and “the animal” occurs at this junction because profitability has caused both of parties to be valued in terms of one skill or feature in particular, that is, both human and animal are rendered down to one basic provision. As Barbara Noske writes: “animals are forced to ‘specialize’ in one skill only” (19), in the same way that the division of labour on the assembly line requires workers to perform one skill, “endlessly repeating the same monotonous movements at a merciless speed” (28).

In my next chapter, the notion of entanglement is expanded to consider how notions of power and consumption place creates not only disciplined and objectified bodies, but “consumable” “animal” *and* human bodies also. Just as the aspects of biotechnology, factory farming, and industrialized slaughter represented in my chosen narratives evoke a sense of horror, so too does the notion of “consumable” and indeed “edible” human bodies. Once again, the power of language to render other bodies as objects, rather than subjects, is presented as a particularly difficult morsel to swallow.

**CHAPTER THREE:****The Ultimate Me(a)taphor****Cannibalism and the Consumable “Other”**

Well of course, we are meat, we are potential carcasses. If I go into a butcher's shop I always think it's surprising that I wasn't there instead of an animal.

- Francis Bacon *The Brutality of Fact: Interviews with Francis Bacon* (1987, p.46)

Power is never benign [...] Power swallows life...

- Deborah Root *Cannibal Culture* (1996, p.6)

The power of popular and authoritative discourses to perpetuate carnism, as well as the hazardous possibilities and realities of genetic modification, factory farming, and slaughterhouse operations, have thus far been the foci of my analysis. The various ways in which the authors I have selected confront their readers and critique these facets of Western industrial meat production by way of their bleak and disturbing narratives have been discussed at length in previous chapters. Yet there is a common thread found in each of the novels that has, until now, only been mentioned in passing and it is this shared feature that is the most glaring, most unsettling, and perhaps most powerful

means of critique: the replacement of the non-human animal other, with humans themselves. In *Cloud Atlas*, *Meat*, and *Under the Skin*, it is the *human* that is grown or modified, the *human* that is hunted or enslaved, and the *human* that is slaughtered and consumed at the behest of those with the largest authoritative, economic, and gastronomic appetites. And whilst *Under the Skin* describes the slaughter and processing of human meat for the benefit of wealthy extra-terrestrial consumers, *Cloud Atlas* and *Meat* portray dystopian societies where certain humans are rendered “animal” through language, genetic manipulation, and/or physical transformation in order to legitimize and naturalize a practice that is often thought to be one of the ultimate societal taboos: anthropophagy. In these narratives, the voracious cannibal becomes a compelling metaphor for both the meat industry and indeed “the West” itself; it is thus a persuasive means of critiquing the frenzied consumption that occurs in both of these arenas.

The decision to put humans in the place of non-human animals in order to convey aspects of “the animal” experience and critique human behaviour is markedly different than many fictional narratives which seek to provide similar insights and examinations. Aesop’s famous morality fables, fairy tales, and many childhood classics have the clear intention to be allegorical and are about human rather than “animal” concerns. Such stories predominantly feature anthropomorphised “animals” which use human language to express themselves and communicate both with members of their own kind and other “animal” species. Often the interactions and relationships between different species of non-human animals and the dialogue between the “animal” characters are used to convey lessons to young readers. Stories such as *The Tortoise and*

*the Hare*, and *The Lion and the Mouse*, and Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894)<sup>79</sup> are examples of these "morality tales" which attempt to provide advice or convey the value of particular traits and behaviours such as patience, perseverance, bravery, and humility amongst others. Other "animal" narratives are indeed interested in the lives of non-human animals, but have been read anthropocentrically as allegories for themes and motifs found within the lives of human individuals and larger societies and cultures. Jack London's wild wolf-dog story *White Fang* (1906), for example, may be viewed as an allegory of "humanity's progression from nature to civilization" as well as a metaphor for the writer's own journey from young trouble-maker to mature writer (Feller 2975) and Richard Adams's rabbit adventure novel *Watership Down* (1972) is said to reflect the "timeless struggles between tyranny and freedom, reason and blind emotion, and the individual and the corporate state" (Magill 1582).<sup>80</sup> Occasionally, fictional tales and novels attempt to give readers insights into aspects of the non-human animal experience: novels such as Alice Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877) – a story told from the point of view of a horse which is put to work as a London taxi puller – encourage empathy for nonhuman animal species and promote "animal" welfare. Some narratives go even further still, and invite readers to empathise with "animal" species destined for slaughter: E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952) and Dick King Smith's *The Sheep Pig* (1983) are two famous examples of children's literature that contain anthropomorphised "farm animals". Certain "animal" characters escape their fate due

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<sup>79</sup> The verses of *The Law of the Jungle*, for example, lay down rules for the safety of individuals, families and communities.

<sup>80</sup> Richard Adams, for example, has stated that he did not intend for the novel to be interpreted as an allegory of human society. Bridgman, Joan "Richard Adams at Eighty". *The Contemporary Review* (The Contemporary Review Company Limited). 277.1615 (2000): 108.

to the help of other non-human animal species and the fact that their human “owners” notice and value their special qualities or abilities.

However, rarely has literature provided insights into the lives of the non-human animal species that are modified, mass produced, and slaughtered for the benefit of Western consumers. Both *Charlotte’s Web*, and *The Sheep Pig* for example, take place within the cosy barn or rolling paddock of the nostalgic family farm – both of which are a far cry from the intensive factory farm operations and industrialized slaughter houses of today. *Under the Skin*, *Meat*, and *Cloud Atlas* are some of the few texts which represent the lives – and deaths – of modern day meat-producing species. At the same time, however, Faber, D’Lacey and Mitchell forego portraying the anthropomorphised “animal” in their novels. In these texts, rather, this element is reversed: the consumable “animal” experience is portrayed through *human* characters that are rendered “animal”, and that consequently find themselves subject to the industrial meat machine.

Faber’s *Under the Skin* contains a complete reversal of the contemporary human subject/“animal” object binary. As explained in previous synopses, Faber describes an extra-terrestrial species (who call themselves “humans”) who hunt, forcibly fatten, and process humans (whom they call “vodrels”) as meat products. Thus, the consumer becomes the consumed in Faber’s text, and the “animal” “Other” becomes the dominant species that considers itself higher up the hierarchical food chain. This reversal enhances the representations of aspects of Western carnism in Faber’s text. His portrayal of the notion that the facility for language separates humans from “animals” and the role various popular and authoritative discourses play in maintaining this separation, as well as his description of the vodrels’ captive environment and gruesome slaughter are enhanced by the fact that it is the *humans* that must contend with these

facets of the Western meat industry in his narrative. These aspects seem more “real” and horrifying and thus more problematic when we picture ourselves in the system; in this way we are strongly urged to identify with – or simply *see* – the creatures implicated in industrial meat production that usually remain ignored or invisible. Whilst this role reversal is an effective representation of the contemporary Western meat industry, it is D’Lacey’s and Mitchell’s depictions of animalized humans that provide the foundation for this chapter. This is because, in these narratives, the authors stop short of a complete role reversal: *humans* are animalized in order to be made meat for other humans. These varied portrayals of cannibalism effectively represent the consumptive habits of the West – particularly those consumers with wealth and power.

Aside from the value of the cannibal figure as an apt metaphor for consumption and power <sup>81</sup>(a point which will be discussed at length later in this chapter), the authors’ invocation of anthropophagy also brings about a sense of uncanniness for the reader that produces a *frisson* associated with the horrific and unspeakable elements of the cultural unconscious. By doing this with regards to Western meat production and consumption, the authors demonstrate the feelings of discomfort, disgust, and anxiety associated with the practice of meat eating and the processes by which that meat is made. Freud’s concept of “das unheimliche” or “the uncanny” is a “peculiar commingling of the familiar and the unfamiliar” (Royle 1) and “can be a matter of something gruesome or terrible, above death and corpses, *cannibalism* [...] the return of the dead...” (2) (emphasis added). On being confronted with descriptions of humans being slaughtered, processed, and eaten by other humans, readers must navigate

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<sup>81</sup> The use of the cannibal as a metaphor for consumption goes back a long way – very famously, in the English literary tradition, to Jonathan Swift’s satire *A Modest Proposal* (1729).

themselves through these conflicting images and their responses to them. Such portrayals are familiar to meat eaters, who must at least be somewhat aware that the slaughter and butchering of certain species must occur in order for them to consume “animal” flesh - despite the physical and linguistic distance between the process and consumer discussed in previous chapters. The portrayal of the human body too is of course a site of familiarity for the reader. However, the insertion of the familiar human body into the meat-production process and the subsequent placement of that body on the human consumer’s plate, results in Freud’s “uncanniness”: the anthropophagy occurring in these narratives is simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar and may result in feelings of instability or uncertainty regarding “the reality of who one is and what is being experienced” (1). Literary critic Nicholas Royle’s discussion of the uncanny is particularly useful in light of D’Lacey’s and Mitchell’s novels. “The uncanny [...],” Royle writes “is not merely an ‘aesthetic’ or ‘psychological’ matter [...] its critical elaboration is necessarily bound up with analysing, questioning and even transforming what is called ‘everyday life’...” (23), which is what the writers achieve in each of these texts. Through their ominous and provocative descriptions of cannibalism, and the “uncanniness” that these descriptions generate, D’Lacey and Mitchell destabilise the parameters of “us”, “them”, “civilized”, “savage”, “human” and “animal”; the result of this, whether the authors specifically intend to or not, is a questioning of the “everyday” practice of meat consumption insofar as it relies on the maintenance of fixed boundaries between these terms.

The notion of cannibalism is also apt in a discussion concerning meat production and consumption in light of the recent high profile given in the media to real-world cases that demonstrate the catastrophic consequences of feeding certain “animal”

species “back to themselves”. Supplying ruminant animals with protein supplements made with the ground remains of their own kind began in the early 1900s and the further industrialization of animal farming during the twentieth century has brought about the increased use of such ‘supplementary’ protein. Hens too are subjected to this “enforced” cannibalism: “retired” layer hens often become pet food or their carcasses are pulverised and fed back to other hens (Potts 167). The infamous BSE (Bovine spongiform encephalopathy) or “mad cow” outbreak in Britain in the 1980s sparked widespread anxiety in meat consumers, as the neurodegenerative disease was not only found to be caused by this “enforced cannibalism”,<sup>82</sup> but could also be passed on to humans via consumption of meat products. The exposure of these facts posed (and still poses) a threat “less to our brains [...] than to our identity as ‘civilized’ humans [...] and to our anthropocentric being-in-the-world” writes Helen Tiffin (“Foot in Mouth” 11), for the disease transgresses “two closely guarded ‘boundaries’ – that between humans and other species, and that between the ‘savage’ and the ‘civilized’” (11). The outbreak of the disease and the mass slaughter of cattle that ensued may not have been enough to cause a significant upheaval of the carnist ideology or result in the decline of industrialized meat production but they have, for some consumers and critics, left a lingering sense of anxiety and uneasiness about what exactly their “meat” eats, and how enforced cannibalism might come back to haunt them at a later date.

In this chapter, I discuss the ways in which the authors subvert the notion of the cannibal as the ultimate “Other” figure in ways that question the boundaries of “civilization” and what the terms “human” or “humanity” really mean within the context

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<sup>82</sup> See:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130123162956/http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/bse/controls-eradication/causes.html>

of the Western meat industry. D'Lacey's and Mitchell's various depictions of cannibalism transgress the boundaries between "us" and "them" or "human" and "animal" and complicate notions of savagery and civilized behaviour. I also analyse the the cannibal figure as a symbol of the exertion of power by one group over another. The hierarchical arrangement of workers in the meat industry is portrayed in *Meat*, whilst the relationship between the language used to describe "animals", meat, and female bodies is featured in *Under the Skin*. The representations of cannibalism the narratives selected for analysis thus confront us with a number of ways in which the modern meat industry creates both human and non-human animal "consumable" bodies. The cannibal, therefore, provides an entrance to the Western meat-machine, opening it up as a site of human and "animal" entanglement wherein the welfare of both are inextricably bound together and both suffer the adverse effects of industrialization.

### **Table Manners: Carnism and the Boundaries of Civilization and Humanity**

Broadly speaking, in Western intellectual history, the 'civilized' has traditionally been constructed by or against the wild, the savage, the animalistic, and thus always been haunted or 'dogged' by it.

- Helen Tiffin "Unjust Relations: Animals, the Species Boundary and Post Colonialism" (2001, 31).

His only rule: once he was running he would not stop for any reason other than being physically unable to continue. That had never happened.

He turned left from the bridge taking him away from civilisation.

- Joseph D'Lacey *Meat* (2008, 9).

Mythological depictions of gods consuming each other in order to increase their strength and authority are perhaps the earliest representations of cannibalism in literature (Guest 5). Sometimes labelled “familial cannibalism”, this “god consumes god” narrative explained “shifts in the balance of divine power” (5) and at the same time described episodes of cannibalism amongst human-life mythic figures. In these cases, vengeful anthropophagy was depicted as an act so savage and unnatural, that it could not be “resolved within the boundaries of human society” (5). Such representations of cannibalism as a monstrous and inhuman act are not limited to ancient literary texts. Historical diaries, travelogues, and other texts written by Western explorers and commentators depict many foreign cultures as “barbarians” and “savages”, citing the occurrence of cannibalism within tribal communities as a reason for this categorization, and thus, as cause to attempt to “civilize” and even colonize these communities. Many have since argued that these depictions have been exaggerated and in some cases entirely invented in order to bolster the colonial objective.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> In *The Man-Eating Myth* (1979), American anthropologist William Arens argued that the practice of cannibalism had no clear basis in fact. His statements prompted historians and anthropologists to review reports of cannibalism. According to anthropologist Beth Conklin, there is widespread agreement with Aren's assertion that many past claims of cannibalism are suspect. However, she and other anthropologists suggest that is “going too far to claim that cannibalism never existed at all” due to the existence of “substantial evidence that consuming human body parts has been an accepted practice in a number of societies in Europe, South America and elsewhere.” (See Salisbury, David. “Brief History of

This “tendency to attribute cannibalism to people they [Europeans] sought to colonize” writes Deborah Root in *Cannibal Culture: Art, Appropriation and the Commodification of Difference*, “seems to have been a way of displacing and drawing attention away from the extent to which European elites were prepared to consume bodies.” (15). Here, Root refers to the West’s fascination with other cultures and customs, and the wealthy citizens who visited Western museums in order to see “signs of unspeakable rituals formerly practiced elsewhere” who in doing so became consumers of people themselves (15). Since its inception then, the label “cannibal” has often been viewed as somewhat of a contradictory figure and it is therefore a valuable means of challenging the borders it is supposed to defend. In other words, the cannibal as a figure associated with “absolute alterity and used to enforce boundaries between a civilized “us” and savage “them” can now be effectively read as “a symbol of the permeability, or instability, of such boundaries” (Guest 2). And, in the context of Western carnism and the critical narratives chosen for analysis, where the boundaries between civilization and savagery break down, so too do notions of “the human” and “the animal”; as a consequence, the foundations on which the carnist ideology rests becomes fractured.

In *Cloud Atlas*, Mitchell consistently includes references to cannibalism in ways that contradict and undermine one another, and in doing so draws attention to the instability between notions of “the civilized” and “the savage”. For example, his nineteenth-century traveller Adam Ewing often affirms the idea of the distinguished and civilized European and the savage, cannibalistic “Other” throughout his diary entries.

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Cannibal Controversies” *Exploration: Online Journal of Vanderbilt University*. August 15 2001. Web. [http://exploration.vanderbilt.edu/news/news\\_cannibalism\\_pt2.htm](http://exploration.vanderbilt.edu/news/news_cannibalism_pt2.htm))

He describes his relationship with Autua, a Moriori slave he encounters on the Chatham Islands, whom he meets as a stowaway on the ship that he is also travelling on. At one point, Ewing becomes terrified that the man will eat him, writing “...what bestial depravity might a savage not be driven to by an empty stomach?” (29). He then procures a plate of food for the man, believing “the fuller his stomach the less likely he was to consume me” (29). Yet in the following pages, as Ewing recounts Autua’s and his uncle Koche’s history, he makes an observation that counters his previous statements. He writes of Koche’s travels and his return as a changed man “garbed in *pakeha* clothes”, and adds: “Newly-discovered Polynesians, it should be added, make easy prey for unscrupulous captains” (31). Here, the would-be cannibal is seen as a consumable object for the European, in contrast to Ewing’s fears that *he* will be consumed by the foreign “Other”.

In the same passage, Ewing recounts Autua’s travels around the world and it is here where Mitchell further undermines the notion of “civilization”. Ewing writes of Autua seeing “grand buildings, parks, horse-drawn carriages & ladies in bonnets & the miracles of civilization” in Sydney, yet these wonders are tainted by the many cruel and gruesome aspects of Autua’s journey (31). This sentence appears in the middle of a paragraph which describes “whales turned to islets of gore, then barrels of sperm-oil”, the hunting of giant tortoises, the shipping of opium “from Calcutta to Canton”, surviving dysentery in Batavia, losing “half of an ear in a skirmish” and so on (31). The products of so-called civilization are made less appealing when they have been textually swallowed by the descriptions of the exploitative “uncivilized” acts that paid for their creation. Again, in direct opposition to his fear of being eaten by the uncivilized outsider, Ewing then mentions the savagery of his own kind at the end of the same

passage, noting that *everywhere* Autua visited, “he observed that casual brutality lighter races show the darker” (31). Notions of civility are therefore undermined and the consumptive appetites and agendas of the so-called “civilized” are brought to the fore.

Shortly after writing these accounts, Ewing decides to reveal Autua (the stowaway) to Captain Molyneux so as to avoid being held responsible for Autua’s concealment. In an attempt to save the slave from being thrown overboard, Ewing assures the captain that Autua’s “Maori master” had “vowed to eat his slave’s warm liver” (34). He then admits that he “sprinkled a little ‘seasoning’” on his version of events, presumably in order to strengthen his request that Autua be spared and for himself not to be punished as a harbourer of stowaways (34). Here, Mitchell appears to reference the widespread agreement by anthropologists that many historical claims and accounts of cannibalism are suspect, having been driven by a colonialist agenda.<sup>84</sup> By having Ewing admit that he has embellished the facts, (mostly for his own benefit), and use culinary language to do so, Mitchell further undermines the efficacy of the “cannibal” label in maintaining the boundaries between civilization and savagery.

However, the most interesting contradiction and critique present in Ewing’s narrative comes within the novel’s first few paragraphs. Ewing’s meeting of the odd Dr Henry Goose occurs at a place that the doctor describes was once a “cannibals banqueting hall” where “the strong engorged themselves on the weak” and where teeth were spat out like “cherry stones” (3), some of which he is now collecting. Goose informs Ewing: “...these base molars, sir, shall be transmuted to gold & how? An artisan

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<sup>84</sup> See note 83.

of Piccadilly who fashions denture-sets for the nobility pays handsomely for human gnashers.” (3). Goose then explains how he intends to have his revenge on the Marchioness Grace of Mayfair for besmirching his name. “The Marchioness wears dental-fixtures fashioned by the aforementioned doctor” he declares; at the next yuletide ball he intends to embarrass her by publically announcing that the Marchioness “masticates with cannibals’ gnashers!” (4). Goose effectively “re-cannibalizes” the already cannibalized by collecting their remains, and then ensuring those remains are subsequently “consumed” by a wealthy member of society. He then intends to undermine a civilized occasion by invoking the cannibal once more as a symbol of savagery, and therefore cause embarrassment to the Marchioness. This passage demonstrates the tenuous parameters of civility and subverts the tradition concept of the cannibal “Other” by portraying a cycle where the wealthy, powerful, or strong continually “feast” on the weak.

References to cannibalism and consumption of the “Other” are also repeated throughout the other narratives in Mitchell’s saga. For example, in the third narrative, “Half-Lives – The first Luisa Rey Mystery”, journalist Jerry Nussbaum tells Luisa about his post “sixteen-pound steak” lunch encounter with “six dreadlocked freaks of the negroid persuasion” (109). “So there we were, this black bro’ frisks me down with his bitonal paw and relieves me of my wallet...” he says, “But Nussbaum had the last laugh,” he continues; “In the cab back to Times Square, I wrote my now-classic ‘New-Tribes’ editorial [...] and it got syndicated *thirty* times by the end of the week! My muggers turned me into a household name” (109) (original emphasis). Here, Nussbaum not only refers to the men in animalized terms (“bitonal paw”) but he essentially “consumes” or appropriates the events in order to turn a profit. His final culinary-tinged comment to

Luisa reinforces this idea: “So Luey-Luey, what say you take me to dinner and I teach *you* how to extract a little gold from the Fang of Fate?” he offers. A character in a position of power is once more depicted as an exploiter or “consumer” of those deemed to be the cultural or societal “Other”.

The following narrative in *Cloud Atlas*, “The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish”, also contains an example of one man profiting from the death of another, and again references to consumption come into play. At a literary awards ceremony, author Dermot Hoggins murders a critic by throwing him off the edge of a building, and immediately after makes his way to the “nibbles table” and selects a “Belgian cracker adorned with Biscay anchovies and parsley....” (151). Whilst the party attendees are shocked by the unfolding events, Dermot’s editor, Timothy Cavendish, delights in the fact that he has a number of unsold copies of Dermot’s aptly entitled memoir “*Knuckle Sandwich*” (152). Given that Dermot is “Britain’s soon-to-be most famous murderer”, Cavendish savours what will be a large influx of money; “A taste of honey!” he exclaims (152).

Finally, in the last of the nested narratives, “Sloosha’s Crossin’”, cannibalism once again makes an appearance, as does Mitchell’s interrogation of what it means to be “civilized”. The narrator in this post-apocalyptic world lives in an age where cannibalism is again a frequent occurrence; members of his family are taken by “savages”, thrown on the backs of horses like sacks of potatoes, and their attackers lick their blood from the knives that cut them (251). Throughout the narrative, visitor Meronym talks about the “fall” of the previous civilization, and it is through her recount of history (centred during Sonmi~451’s lifetime) that we learn what caused the destruction of society and the descent into barbarism. Hunger is to blame:

Yay, Old'uns' Smart mastered sicks, miles, seeds an' made miracles ord'nary, but it din't master one thing, nay, a hunger in the hearts o'humans, yay a hunger for more.

More what? I asked.

O, more gear, more food, faster speeds, longer lifes, easier lifes, more power, yay [...] Vallesmen'd not want to hear [...] that human hunger birthed the Civ'lize, but human hunger killed it too (286).

By means of the numerous references to “civilization”, cannibalism, and “hunger” throughout Mitchell’s text – along with the reappearance of various characters, features, and objects (such as a birthmark in the shape of a comet, the musical composition *Cloud Atlas*, and pieces of Ewing’s diary) – Mitchell suggests that the world is bound to replicate its mistakes. It is stuck in a cycle which “consumes” both human and “animal” bodies, undermines its own notions of “civilization”, and essentially cannibalizes itself in order to satiate its ravenous appetite for power over others. The final pages of Ewing’s diary encapsulate this idea. Ewing asks “Why undermine the dominance of our race, our gunships, our heritage and our legacy? Why fight the ‘natural’ (oh, weaselly word!) order of things?” and his response is particularly telling: “Why? Because of this: - one fine day, a purely predatory world *shall* consume itself. [...] In an individual, selfishness uglifies the soul; for the human species, selfishness is extinction” (528).

D'Lacey also critiques the meaning of "civilization" in *Meat*. Slaughterman Rick Shanti, who ultimately assists in bringing about the downfall of the cannibalistic meat industry in Abyrne, takes to running long distances with rocks in his pack to deal with his dissent towards the meat-centred status quo. Rick poignantly chooses a route towards the wild and untamed areas of Abyrne rather than through the streets around the town's urban districts:

It was five miles to the bricks. That was the first landmark he ran to every Sunday. When he reached them, he turned off the main road and the path took him through brambles, nettles and spiky hawthorn down below the road level [...] So overgrown was the sunken path it was like running through a jungle at the bottom of a giant gutter.

He turned left from the bridge taking him away from civilization. (9)

The idea of what "civilization" constitutes is subverted in D'Lacey's dystopia. Richard – a vegetarian who increasingly identifies with the animalized Chosen and seeks solace and camaraderie with prophet John Collins and his "army" of vegetarian dissenters – would rather run towards the decrepit and unpredictable wastelands than take part in what the wealthy and powerful deem to be "civilization". These "uncivilized" wastelands are also where the prophet John Collins and his vegetarian followers meet, in dark and dusty underground spaces of the "Derelict Quarter" (216). Again, the notion of civility is subverted, because these shunned and "Othered" "cave-dwellers" refuse to take part in anthropophagy and are ultimately responsible for granting the Chosen their freedom. Thus, the line between "civil" and "savage" is once more blurred and disrupts notions of what is "human" and what is "animal". The fact that Collins and his followers ultimately succeed in usurping the reign of both the meat baron Rory Magnus and

religious order The Welfare, completely undermines the authority of those who consider themselves “civilized”.

Further links between cannibalism and authority form the basis for analysis in the next section. References to anthropophagy in *Meat* and *Under the Skin* in particular, illustrate how authoritative figures and powerful institutions use language to create objectified and “consumable” bodies both inside, and outside, the Western industrial meat machine.

### **Eating Each Other: Cannibalism and the Exertion of Power**

The cannibal seeks human bodies to eat, and the desire for flesh generates escalating desire. This hunger for flesh is generalized into society as a whole when consumption is treated as a virtue and seen as a source of pleasure and excitement in itself. Consumption is power, and the ability to consume excessively and wilfully becomes the most desirable aspect of power.

- Deborah Root *Cannibal Culture: Art, Appropriation, and the Commodification of Difference*. (1996, 9)

The Weak are Meat the Strong do Eat.

- David Mitchell *Cloud Atlas* (2004, 508)

As briefly mentioned in the previous section, cannibalism has long been associated with imperialist and colonialist objectives and for this reason it is a potent metaphor for one group's exertion of power over another. The taboo practise of anthropophagy conjures images of "an extreme desire to devour a person, to incorporate someone into oneself, a lust for total possession or a rage for obliteration and supremacy" (Sceats, 34) and the texts selected for analysis in this section each portray cannibalism as representative of this lust for power. What is particularly significant is that the trope effectively illustrates the ways in which meat consumption makes both human and "animal" bodies "consumable" objects. That is, not only do the texts contain "animalized" humans that are objectified for the purposes of slaughter and consumption, but the humans who take part in the slaughtering process are also objectified and treated as "disposable" or "consumable" by those in positions of power. The way in which women's bodies are made "edible" by the language of meat, consumption, and animality are also featured in the narratives selected for analysis. By presenting the reader with these various types of consumable bodies, the authors are once more drawing upon the realities of the Western industrialized meat production process as a series of human/"animal" entanglements. In doing so, they make the separation of the two terms, and the hierarchy that they imply, appear increasingly unstable.

The use of the cannibal metaphor to represent power relationships is most clearly evident in D'Lacey's *Meat*. Throughout the narrative, the reader is constantly reminded that the consumption of meat gives the consumer a higher status. Head of MMP Rory Magnus is one of the most powerful citizens of Abyrne: he controls the supply of meat to the entire population and keeps in close contact with members of the religious order the Welfare – the other main authoritative body in the town. Magnus's

internal monologue during his interview with the prophet John Collins, sets out the link between meat consumption and power very clearly: “The ability to afford and eat meat gave you status; it meant that you weren’t eat yourself. It meant that you were above cattle. The townsfolk ate meat to stay human” (111).

In addition, throughout the narrative, both the animalized Chosen *and* regular citizens of Abyrne consistently appear “edible” to Magnus. He incessantly consumes the meat of the Chosen; but he talks, and is talked about, as though he is able to consume anything. For example, we are told at the outset of the novel that “plenty of the men in Magnus’s employ were a rib shy of a rack” (6), and when a group of MMP workers talk about getting a possible pay rise, one responds: “Yeah right. Magnus’ll cut your bollocks off and eat ‘em in front of you first” (243). Magnus himself makes his powerful all-consuming status clear during a conversation with John Collins when he asks the prophet to explain what he has been telling the townspeople:

Look, Collins, just tell the bloody story. Don’t try to give me your spooky sales pitch alongside it. I am the producer, the processor, the distributor *and* the salesman. You are merely the product. If there’s any selling to be done, I’ll do it. To put it another way, I’m the butcher and you’re the meat. You’d do well to remember that (133) (original emphasis).

Later in the narrative, Magnus holds Shanti’s daughters captive in his mansion and his threatening words once more suggest his power to consume bodies indiscriminately. “I eat bad girls,” he tells Heema and Harsha; “I chop them up and while they’re still begging me to stop and then I eat them. Raw. By the handful” (282). Moments later he adds: “Shut your nasty little gobs or I’ll cut you up and eat you right now” (282), and later still, he threatens: “You two stay where you are or I’ll suck out

your eyeballs" (286). In addition, in the following passage, one of Magnus' guards is attacked by Shanti as he attempts to save his daughters. With the same cannibalistic desire, the meat baron declares: "I've always liked the look of that man's arse. Get Cleaver to cut me some rump steaks. Then you can bury him." The employee he addresses is also not immune to these notions of edibility and disposability: "And do a proper job this time," says Magnus, "or I'll have your bollocks" (287).

Finally, as disruptions to Magnus' empire become increasingly drastic, Magnus considers a plan to overthrow the Central Cathedral and take over the Welfare in order to claim authority over the whole town and control "every single cut of meat that would ever be fried" (309). His scheme includes burning all of Abyrne's religious texts and himself and his men cooking the bodies of Welfare workers upon the flames. He then considers eating the cooked flesh of the workers: "Perhaps they'd eat them too," he thinks; "It would have the desired effect on the minds of the townsfolk. In fact, yes, that was what he'd do: he'd eat the Grand Bishop's roasted heart in front of every person in the town. They'd never forget the image of his flame illuminated face, feasting on the core of his enemy" (309). Combined, these examples of Magnus's willingness to consume others to signify and solidify his power provide an effective avenue for a double-edged critique. Fiddes' notion that the consumption of "animal" flesh is a means for humans to exert their supremacy and power over other species is reflected in Magnus's attitude, but so is the contention that those in positions of authority – and particularly those with appetites for more power and profit – have the ability to treat both "animals" *and* humans as disposable bodies.

However, D'Lacey also presents this "hunger" for authority and "diet" of consumables as an ultimately detrimental and "unhealthy" enterprise. Throughout the

narrative the reader is often informed that those who eat the most meat (that is, Abyrne's wealthy citizens and those who occupy positions of authority in the religious order) are likely to get sick. Ironically, the symptoms and effects of this flesh-induced sickness, is also described in terms of "consumption". When Parson Mary Simonson becomes increasingly sick, D'Lacey depicts it as such: "Each morning she awoke to the *nibbling* in her stomach. That sensation of being *devoured* from the inside woke her..." (85) (emphasis added). Magnus also has "the shakes" and describes how it was common in every district and no one seemed to recover. He explains that the illness reduced victims to "quivering, man-shaped lumps of gelatine" (168). And, as mentioned earlier, he is often described in terms of meat: he has a "meaty fist" (234), a "sausage finger" (129) and is referred to as "a walking, talking carcass of fat and meat" (106). The fact that Magnus in particular – a wealthy, highly authoritative figure and avid meat-eater – is frequently described in this way adds to this notion of cyclical consumability. Thus, the eaters eventually become the eaten, suggesting that the quest for power and the continuous consumption of othered bodies is "unhealthy", and eventually leads those in power to become "consumable" themselves.

The connection between the language of meat consumption and the language used to describe women's bodies is also represented in the novels and is prominent in Faber's and D'Lacey's texts in particular. Due to the "absence of the actual referent" in meat production and consumption (that is, due to the invisibility of "the animal" itself), "meat as a metaphor is easily adaptable", writes Carol Adams (*The Sexual Politics of Meat* 75). The "inferior status" of women and animals in a patriarchal culture is combined through language (102) when similar words are used to describe women, "animals", and meat; in this way, women are made to seem "edible" or consumable. This

is evident in the way women are referred to as “animals”, as “pieces of meat”, when their body parts are likened to the edible “cuts” of “animals” (such as “breasts” and “thighs”), when they are described in culinary terms such as “fresh”, “tasty”, or “juicy”, and when they are considered “fair game” for the hunt and so on. “The entire system operates as if women are perceived by men to be analogous to hunted, or else farmed, meat”, writes Fiddes. “Her body parts portioned into the same names as the animals on a supermarket shelf” (151). The “dismemberment” of women is sexualized by the use of this language, and such terms illustrate the “cycle of objectification, fragmentation, and consumption, which links butchery and violence in our culture” (Adams *Sexual Politics of Meat* 73); cannibalism thus becomes a referent point when this type of language is employed.

Fiddes also notes that this terminology is not limited to sexual or pornographic discourse, but is a feature of “mainstream” discourse also. He points out that that the “distinct parallels” between “the language of the meat system” and the words used (predominantly by men) to describe women make it seem as though “one system of exploitation is modelled on the other” (148). I share Fiddes view that the entanglement of language and welfare of women and “animals” that occurs at this point is worth close inspection, since the “metaphorical use of the concept of meat” in this way is a development upon “its normal implication of strength, power, or challenge” (148). The representation of this gendered “cannibalistic” rhetoric is featured in Faber’s *Under the Skin*.

In Chapter One, I referred to the ways in which humans (vodsels) are objectified in Faber’s text through the use of “animal” and culinary imagery. As Isserley hunts her hitchhikers, she considers “fleshy” (3) male vodsels in their “prime condition” (4) with

and wants to ensure that they “make the grade” (4). She is specifically looking for “big muscles” (1) and “a hunk on two legs” (1). Given that the reader is not aware of Isserley’s agenda, or the fact that she is not human but alien, these references appear at first to be of a sexual nature. Statements such as “Isserley wasn’t interested in females, at least not in that way” (3) and “If the hitcher was male, she usually went back for another look [...] Assuming he’d made a reasonable impression on her, she would execute a U-turn [...] she’d size him up a second time” (3) support this notion. One passage in particular, illustrates this sexualized, edible, and “animal” imagery in a particularly potent way:

In truth, there was for Isserley an addictive thrill about the challenge. She could have some magnificent brute sitting in her car, right next to her, knowing for sure that he was coming home with her, and she could already be thinking ahead to the next one. Even while she was admiring him, following the curves of his brawny shoulders or the swell of his chest under his T-shirt, savouring the thought of how superb he’d be once he was naked, she would keep one eye on the roadside, just in case an even better prospect was beckoning to her out there. (4-5).

Once more through the process of defamiliarization, the reader is confronted by the power of language to objectify “othered” bodies, and by the similarities in language used to describe “animals”, meat, and women. Familiar language is made unfamiliar and is highlighted as a result of the reversal of the subject’s gender in these descriptions; that it is Isserley who makes these comments with regards to male targets subverts the “real-world” patriarchal use of this language and draws the reader’s attention to its

operation. Only later do we realise the irony of these descriptions: they do not make the male vodsels metaphorically consumable in sexual terms, rather Isserley's descriptions of "fleshy" males (3) and her desire for "meaty" (32) "specimens" (1) is literal. The hitchhikers are, in fact, rendered, sold, and consumed as meat products by members of Isserley's alien species.

However, Isserley herself is not exempt from being described and objectified in "consumable" terms – although in this case metaphorically. As briefly discussed in Chapter One, she is made edible when her breasts are described as "a couple of ripe ones" (11) and when her sexual attacker "knead[s] her breasts [...] repeatedly trapping the nipples between thumb and forefinger, rolling them like pellets of dough" (184). Female vodsels (humans) are also described in edible terms: their "pink breasts quiver like jelly" (153). Despite the fact that it is the male of the species that is ultimately consumed in Faber's text, Isserley herself is still presented as somewhat "consumable" in order to lure hitchhikers into her vehicle. The transformations she undergoes are not simply to aid in her attempts to blend into the vodsel population, but to actively draw attention the attention of the male gaze.

Isserley's "consumability" and the role that this plays in her alien species' meat production process alludes to the fact that industrialized meat and "animal" product production relies heavily on the exploitation of the bodies of female species. Egg and dairy production, for example, exploit the reproductive systems of female chickens and cows, and female pigs (sows) in factory farms are confined to gestation crates and forced to produce offspring until they are no longer "viable". Towards the end of Faber's novel, Isserley finds a note in her pocket from co-worker Esswis which further alludes this gendered exploitation. In the note, Vess Incorporated requests Isserley to

supply the company with an unprocessed and carefully wrapped, vodsel female, “preferably one with intact eggs” (272). This suggests not only the possibility of vodsel females being “farmed”, but also signifies the end of Isserley’s hunting career, and thus her disposability as a female worker.

The fabricants in Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas*, also represent the exploitation and consumability of the female species in industrialized meat production. Sonmi~451 and her co-worker fabricants from other stems are all female clones who spend their lives as slaves in the fast food industry before becoming meat products themselves. They are also grown in “womb tank[s]” (192), suggesting that the female reproductive system has either been manipulated or recreated in order to supply the corpocracy with cloned workers by the thousand. A steadfast patriarchal society is also represented in Sonmi~451’s narrative. Female fabricants working at “Papa Song’s” restaurant (which insinuates the franchise is owned or named after a man) are considered “downstrata” (199) from their male supervisors, who may “manage the fabricants as they see fit” (200). The “pureblood” human “Seers”, ensure that the women fulfil the roles assigned to them by keeping them under constant control and surveillance.

In *Under the Skin*, Isserley is also surveyed by her fellow male workers who make her feel as though she is simply a piece of disposable “brute equipment” (152). On the day following her request to see the “processing” of a male vodsel (prompted by Isserley’s attack at the hands of a vodsel hitchhiker), Isserley enters the food hall where one of the men sniggers and tells her that “another woman might be coming” (259). The guise of assistance and friendship is given, but it is clear that the comment is intended to make Isserley feel replaceable. It is in this same passage that Isserley comes to a poignant realisation:

Then it dawned on her that it must be all a matter of hierarchy and privilege. Unser and Hilis were a cut above these brawny specimens littered around the dining hall; probably the two of them ate together in some cosy retreat – enjoying a better class of food too, no doubt. [...] And what about the way Vess Incorporated conveyed its messages to her via Esswis, despite the fact that everything revolved around her? (258)

Here, Isserley considers the existence not only of a hierarchy based on employment roles, but the operation of a gender-based hierarchy also. In the context of the novel as a whole, Isserley's objectification and consumability as both a female vodsels and a female human (and indeed a hybrid of the two) are made clear.

However, despite the existence of the hierarchies described, and Isserley's "doubled" consumability, Isserley refers to those higher in rank as "a cut above" the other "brawny specimens" (258) and the language she chooses here is particularly telling. By describing her male co-workers in this way, Isserley fights back against the consumability and objectification of her own gender. As a result, in Faber's text, almost everything is rendered consumable: vodsels, human, male, female, and indeed the landscape itself.<sup>85</sup>

In each of the three novels I have discussed then, the invocation of cannibalism is above all, a striking metaphor for the power relationships at work within the meat production industry and indeed Western society in general. Feelings of disgust and horror generated by the uncanny cannibal figure prompt the reader to consider their own consumptive practices and the attendant power games that exist and are

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<sup>85</sup> Please refer to my discussion of Faber's use of culinary imagery in Chapter One.

maintained because of those practices. Through their various representations of anthropophagy and the language of consumption, the authors powerfully confront their reader with the ways in which human bodies are made consumable by the incessant production line of Western carnism.

## CONCLUSION

...what we know of animals is just a story – a story that we have made up about animals and ourselves. If these systems of classification that we have been discussing are all essentially just stories, can we create a new story that is more inclusive and humane?

- Margo De Mello, *Animals in Society* (2012, p55)

Why fight the 'natural' (oh weaselly word!) of things?

Why? Because of this: - one fine day, a purely predatory world *shall* consume itself [...]

- David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas* (2004, 528).

Not a lot has changed in the intervening months between now and when I began my research project by writing my introduction. With the odd exception, similar marketing campaigns, news articles, and “reality” television offerings within television programming and various other media continue to reaffirm the “carnist” status quo unhindered by any subversive offerings or representations to the contrary. It has become increasingly apparent that the fictional narrative is a valuable medium in which the types of discourses and ethical issues often omitted from these types of media can

be located and critiqued. The potential for *Under the Skin*, *Cloud Atlas*, and *Meat* (and other fictional narratives of the same ilk) to reach a wider audience and perhaps have their respective portrayals of Western meat production and consumption conveyed in alternative ways is also a promising prospect. Both *Under the Skin*, and *Cloud Atlas*, have been adapted for the screen, and a film version of *Meat* is set to follow.

Not only do these fictional texts present the various discourses and ideologies involved in the promotion and maintenance of Western meat production and consumption that “reality” media leave out, and not only do they interrogate the boundaries and binaries at play within that context, but they are also significant and effective in that, by virtue of their cross-genre categorisation, they are literary boundary transgressors themselves. These narratives may be assigned to a number of categories simultaneously - “dystopian”, “speculative”, “horror” “satire”, “science fiction”, “fantasy” “post-apocalyptic”, “genre”, “literary” and so on, not to mention the numerous sub-genre categories that may also be applicable; this cross-category classification enhances their transgressive and provocative representations of the many facets of Western carnism. My selection of these particular texts is also an attempt to address and counteract the “severely disabling effect that regimes of taste can have on the social transformative function of literature” (Armstrong 225); that is, their cross-genre transgressivity and critical agenda destabilise notions about what types of literature are “worthy” of analysis and criticism. This is also important within the wider context of human-animal studies itself. This relatively new field of knowledge may also be viewed as a hybrid of sorts – a mosaic-like discipline, which gleans theories and ideas from a number of epistemologies. Given that the compartmentalisation of knowledge into discrete disciplines is itself a “process of purification with its attendant power games” (Taylor

“Anthropomorphism” 277), this hybrid quality of human-animal studies as a whole is a potent ally in the assessment of power distribution within and between species.

Through their respective representations of the human-animal divide, the meat production process, and the metaphorical cannibal figure, my chosen narratives make evident the value of meat as a potent symbol for the operation of other kinds of power relationships and consumptive habits. Thus, when we talk about the human-animal hierarchy that underpins meat consumption, we inevitably consider other hierarchies at play; when we consider the physical and linguistic distance between consumer and “animal” that is continually fostered by authoritative bodies, we are encouraged to turn our minds to other hidden or “naturalized” ideologies that might be in operation without our realising it; when we are prompted to look at the objectification of “animals” in the meat production process, we must inevitably see how humans are objectified in the process; and when we are faced with the uncanny cannibal figure, we are forced to confront the fact that “the man-eating myth is still with us, but now explicitly revealed to be a story about *ourselves*, not others, as the cannibal has moved from the fringes of our world to its very centre...” (Kilgour “The Function of Cannibalism” 247). In light of the prompts and alternative points of view that can be gleaned from these fictional narratives, it has become all the more clear that the meat on Western screens, plates, menus, and minds carries with it a process that entangles human and “animal” welfare in ways far more diverse and numerous that it is possible to discuss in one thesis alone.

Perhaps, though, the most intriguing aspect of the human-animal entanglement that meat engenders is that the whole “carnist” system – from the existence of the human-animal hierarchy, the use of everyday, popular, and authoritative discourses

that legitimize and promote various production methods, to the removal of those production methods from the consumer line of sight, all work in combination to ensure that Western consumers are – mostly, and most of the time – disciplined into dutifully upholding the system. It might well be true then, that consumers have much more in common with the “animals” they eat than they realise: for in this sense, meat-eaters seem to be just as confined to their spaces as the “animals” they like to keep on their plates. Unlike the “animals” however, Western consumers have the ability to unlock their own cages; though whether or not they choose to unlock them, is ultimately up to them. In any event, what *Under the Skin*, *Meat*, and *Cloud Atlas* have shown, is that the arena of the fictional narrative is an apt place to start looking for the master’s keys.

In addition, if what we know of “animals” and the systems we use to classify and objectify them are indeed just “stories” as Margo De Mello suggests (55), then the opportunity for the creation of new narratives, alternative systems, and subversive stories must also exist. Thus, not only are fictional narratives able to represent and reintroduce the hidden aspects of our ambivalent relationships with “animals” and the realities of normalized and naturalized practices, but they are also a means by which we might suggest new ways of relating to and treating “animals”, and portraying what an alternative future might look like. As Mitchell’s fabricant Sonmi~451 states in *Cloud Atlas*: “All revolutions are the sheerest fantasy until they happen; then they become historical inevitabilities” (342).

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