

Fiction's Swarm
The Creation(s) of Animals at the End(s) of Nature

By

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Abstract

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My dissertation is concerned with the consequences of how literary, historical, and scientific representations of animal life tend to depict our fellow creatures through two static frameworks: as either “object” (i.e., a machine-like entity that runs purely on pre-programmed instinct) or as “person” (i.e., a being that shares *all* the same traits as we humans). All critique notwithstanding, these tenacious frameworks significantly shape how we interact with living beasts. In contrast to these frameworks, I propose that it is more productive to start from the assumption that it is the entangled interactions between humans, animals, ideologies, and technologies that influence not what animals “inherently” are, but what they, like us, continually become. My dissertation, then, places literature’s beasts at a critical locus within these entanglements, and is composed of four chapters, each dedicated to a different genre of animal narrative: The Hunting Genre; The Fecund Dystopia Genre; The Melancholy Conservation Genre; and the Lively Catastrophe Genre. While my primary texts are not exhaustive of these broadly defined genres, they do serve as fruitful examples of what sorts of animal narratives—and what sorts of animal realities—may emerge from a reimagining of “fiction’s swarm.” Through them, I hope to achieve two objectives: first, to closely analyze a few specific cases of how animals—in both fictional and nonfictional narratives—are used by systems of power to control, determine, and end life on individual, landscape-wide, and global scales. And secondly, to explore how even within the mass suffering and death that the control of life requires, the interactions between humans and non-humans often develop significant and surprising means through which to enact the potentialities that some narratives deny, and others celebrate.

I begin my dissertation with the Hunting Genre, analyzing works that are both autobiographical and “strictly” fictional but which all focus on a consequential struggle to the death between a highly individualized human and a highly individualized animal. I begin with Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick* (1851) and interpret it as an early, important, simultaneous critique and idealization of hunting, as it is a work defined by both its praise for hunters as well as its painful awareness of the purely economic factors driving hunts for large animals under capitalism. This is followed by two autobiographical accounts, J.H. Patterson’s *The Man-eaters of Tsavo* (1907) and Carl Akeley’s *In Brightest Africa* (1923), for these books present a startling shift in attitudes towards hunting, from a firm belief in its necessity to agony over the extinctions it begets. I next discuss the literary presentations of hunting in William Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses* (1942) for its focus on the struggle between the supposed nobility of hunting in the midst

of the destruction it wrecks on nature and its creatures. David Vann's novel *Goat Mountain* (2013) is the final work I examine for its 21st century take on the blatant rage a contemporary hunter may feel towards themselves and towards an anthropogenic world that is rapidly losing its wildlife.

I follow this chapter with an analysis of works in what I call the Fecund Dystopia genre, which are, ranging from the beginning of the 20th century to the present, primarily concerned with the violent production, reproduction, and intensive control of life. Often explicitly associated with images of and critiques about factory farms, texts in this genre present both animal and human life as coerced to exist in an undifferentiated mass, more raw material than individual beings. While this chapter continues to follow something of a chronological order, I am here primarily interested in examining the similarities between these kinds of narratives. For example, I read Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1904) and Timothy Pachirat's *Every Twelve Seconds* (2011) as kindred texts in their visceral descriptions of fast-paced mechanical animal slaughter and deliberate portrayals of how human and animal flesh undergo similar agonies within the factory farm. Margaret Atwood's *Oryx & Crake* (2003) and Don LePan's *Animals* (2009) are brought into conversation for the similarities of their imagined futures, in which the line between humans and animals has been worn thin as a means to further capitalist enterprises. J.M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* (1999) is also included for its applicable struggle with the strange current pseudo-existence of animals in the modern/contemporary world as omnipresent in our food and in our theory yet as less and less present alive in everyday human life.

My third chapter is dedicated to what I have dubbed the Melancholy Conservation genre, which is composed of works that focus on describing human-caused animal extinctions as tragedies that are worth fighting against, even if this fight is implicitly framed as a losing battle. I found that a relatively concise picture of this genre's uses (and abuses) could be woven from a study of narratives concerning gorillas and chimpanzees, and thus focus my analysis on works that reveal the astonishing transformations these creatures underwent in the Western mindset. I begin with Merian C. Cooper's "monster adventure" films *King Kong* (1933) and *Mighty Joe Young* (1949) for offering a window into how completely and rapidly the image of the gorilla—and the "natural world" it was framed as embodying—changed over the 20th century from that of a violent, destructive force to a gentle victim of humanity's whims. Jane Goodall's *In the Shadow of Man* (1971) and Dian Fossey's *Gorillas in the Mist* (1983) are next considered for offering influential examples of a (then) new hybrid of animal narrative that is safari adventure, scientific journal, and emotional, even "feminine" framing of what animal life is and how we should treat it. I end with Karen Joy Fowler's novel *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* (2013) for its careful, and often heart-wrenching, depiction of the generational traumas brought about by the technologies and social systems that define our closest animal relatives as commodities, and the extinctions this framework all but assuredly ends with.

To end my dissertation—and in what I hope will provide some alternative analysis/relief to the subjects of my first three chapters—I examine a number of works I categorize under the Lively Catastrophe genre, which operate with explicit recognition of the pain, violence, and loss that have already defined landscapes both on and off the page. Their narratives, however, also grant their protagonists a significant amount of autonomy and possibility in their deliberate creations of human—and more than human—relationships. I begin the chapter by comparing Mary Austin's *The Land of Little Rain* (1903) to Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974). Both texts present a near religious contemplation of nonhuman existence; both also offer a vision of nature and its creatures in which the violence inherent in the natural world, and the author's

wonder and love of nature in spite of it, is paramount. Marlen Haushofer's *The Wall* (1968, English translation 1990) is next read as a novel whose protagonist, even in the grip of personal tragedies, daily drudgery, and debilitating physical ailments, finds means through which to form meaningful—and essential—connections with nonhuman creatures. I end this chapter with Hayao Miyazaki's manga *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1982-1994) for its melancholic yet fiercely and actively hopeful speculations on the tragedies and joys that may be formed through human and nonhuman interactions. In so doing, these works argue for the necessity of the terrifying, amazing potentials that define every relationship between humans and their fellow creatures.

Animal narratives, embodied and embedded within animal lives and flesh, inspire consequences that are, quite literally, deadly serious for all parties. What sorts of narratives may contribute to less lethal relations between humans and other creatures is thus not only a pressing question, but one that could greatly shape life, landscape, and even the possibility of a habitable future.

To my mother, father, and little sister

For no creature can thrive alone

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Introduction: A Beastly Paradox

My dissertation is founded on less of a question and more of a concern; specifically, about how literary (and, to a significant extent, scientific) representations of nonhuman animal life (hereafter referred to as “animal life”) tend to depict our fellow creatures through one of two seemingly incompatible frameworks. Here utilizing Cary Wolfe’s useful conceptualization of the term—in which framing is a logical, epistemological, social, and material question (and problem) whose consequences decide “what we recognize and what we don’t, what counts and what doesn’t”—animal life is commonly framed as “object” (i.e. an entity that runs purely on pre-programmed instinct and that possess neither personality, emotion, nor other strictly “human” attributes) or as “person” (i.e. a being that shares *all* the same traits as we humans, if in different ways) (Wolfe 6). The annals of animal studies is now marked by decades of theory which has questioned and undermined this division by revealing the insufficiency of both “sides” as models of animal life, from ecofeminist Donna Haraway’s articulation of the importance of recognizing human-animal “significant otherness” to social constructionist Kathy Rudy’s argument that humans and animals “are not separate entities, but creatures inextricably attached to one another through emotional bonds” (Haraway, *Manifesto*, 6; Rudy xii). Yet such is the tenacity of these two frameworks (and the narratives informed by them) that they continue to significantly shape both the style and substance of the human-made narratives and the “natural” systems we use to interact with living beasts. Given this state of affairs (and thus my concern), this dissertation is defined by two primary questions: firstly, whether the animal-as-object and animal-as-person camps are truly as divided as they are often presented; and secondly, as to whether there is an alternative framing of animal life that does not depend on the animal-as-human/animal-as-object dichotomy.

From the fallout of Charles Darwin’s game-changing *Origin of Species* to contemporary arguments raging over how “human” some animal species (such as chimpanzees and dolphins) may be, many human interactions with and depictions of animals are shaped by a “longing to discover meaning in nature,” particularly since “nature” is often framed as the provider of “crisp and value-neutral renderings” of reality itself (Poliquin 9; Schiebinger xii). The consequential belief that animals exist as embodiments of “nature” in all its many iterations has already been thoroughly analyzed by numerous scholars. Such analysis is present in a wide range of fields, from historian Harriet Ritvo’s articulation of how social class was “naturalized” in Victorian England partially through the association of different human groups with different animal species to anthropologist Russell Tuttle’s explicit analysis of the close historical link between the science of primatology and the “science” underpinning Euroamerican racism. Yet in spite of the long-standing assumption that animals contain lessons for how humans should or can run their lives, human interactions with other animals—as has become particularly noticeable in the 21st century’s extremes—are often startlingly, even extraordinarily, paradoxical.

It is true, on one hand, that even “hard” scientific fields have revealed the difference between human and animal consciousness to be narrower than previously believed. Much contemporary research on the animal mind—as exemplified by neuroscientist Gregory Berns’s work with dogs and MRI machines—strongly suggests that in many vital aspects animals think and feel “like us.” It is simultaneously true that advances in fields such as genetics—as indicated by the deliberate creation of creatures such as lab mice engineered with specific diseases—have made it increasingly possible to manipulate many aspects of nonhuman nature, these technologies thus lending “evidence” to the notion that animals are merely pliable “things.” Yet

in spite of their seeming complete incompatibility, I argue that both these (albeit broadly defined) “animals-as-people” and “animals-as-objects” camps are interlinked through a definition of animality that is fundamentally unvarying, that takes as a base belief that an animal’s very being is static, “naturally” unchangeable. In contrast to this—and following theorist Karen Barad’s interpretation of matter as not “a property of things” but rather as “a dynamic and shifting entanglement of relations”—I argue it is more productive (and less prone to theories of predetermination) to start from the assumption that it is the deliberately constructed relations and deliberately constructed technologies through which we interact with other creatures that immensely influences not what animals “inherently” are, but what they, like us, continually become (Barad 35).

The now-towering amount of scholarly work that centers on the creation(s) of specific types of animals—and animal lives—through the material realities of factory farms alone stands as testament to how productive the inclusion of technology in the formation and interpretation of animal existence can be. Yet instead of focusing solely on existing relations between animals and the technological systems that now significantly define their lives, my dissertation is primarily focused on placing animal narratives—in both their fictional and “nonfictional” forms—at a critical locus within the entanglements between humans, animals, ideologies, and technologies that shape lived experience. I argue that animal narratives—and particularly their explicit allowance of emotion, of historicized landscapes, of a multitude of certainties and uncertainties that go into the makeup of how an individual being may traverse through and survive (or not) the landscapes upon which they depend—underpin in important ways not just what sorts of technologies and human-animal interactions come into being, but which kinds of human-animal interactions are permitted to exist at all. My dissertation is thus dedicated to analyzing how the versatility of animal life has been expressed and denied in the intersection of animal narratives and the living beasts, living humans, particular technologies, and the entities I define as animal-things¹ whose beings are so inextricably entangled. In recognition of animal narrative’s role in shaping the realities of living beasts, in other words, this dissertation stands as an endeavor to make some sense, and offer some possibility for its future manifestations, of the menagerie of wildly contradictory beasts who all make up fiction’s swarm.

The Textual Field

The so-dubbed “animal question” (that is, what animals are and how we should relate to them) presents a challenge as fascinating as it is frustrating to defining a textual field. This is due to the simple fact that animals are omnipresent in both material, fictional, and theoretical forms. Yet the ubiquity of animality within writing not only makes animal narrative a productive area of study, but almost “by nature” necessitates an entangled cross-disciplinary approach to the study of such narratives. In a very real sense—from the realities of factory farms to the intentional, political “herding” of human populations into particular shapes—we are all always already living under the shadow of their words. Indeed, in addition to examining my primary texts, I had to give due recognition to how many of these animal narratives are accompanied by particular material entities—the animals themselves and the systems built around them—that need to be acknowledged if the full weight of my primary texts is to be understood. What these material objects are depends on the text in question, but they range from: the taxidermied bodies of the

¹ Human-made objects which are either primarily composed of material originating from once-living animals and/or which [who?] are made to resemble animals in some capacity.

animals stalked through the hunting narratives; the legions of meat present in grocery stores whose forms define the pages of dystopian fiction; the language-gauging paraphernalia used to test how much the great apes are “like us”; and the pollutants and WMDs that drive both apocalyptic fears as well as the growing attempts to articulate some way out of current deadly paradigms. The animal narratives under inquiry, in other words, cannot be separated from their material inspirations or their material consequences. It is with this material/textual reality in mind that I organized my dissertation into four distinct genres of animal narrative (here working under the commonplace definition of “genre” as a means to group together texts that are defined by similarities in subject matter, style, and form), as well as into an overarching narrative/examination of how bio-capitalist enterprises, over the past few centuries, have radically altered both landscapes and the creatures upon them in order to “naturalize” designs of production and accumulation. The four genres I examine, while overlapping, roughly correspond to four stages of this process:

The first of these, the Hunting Genre, follows the “emptying” of landscapes of their indigenous animal and indigenous humans through the mass violence that defined colonial hunting. This genre is composed of literature that, both in the forms of “strict” autobiographical accounts and explicitly fictional works, focuses primarily on the to-the-death struggle between a highly individualized human and a highly individualized animal. These texts are often grandiose in their presentation of the act of hunting, and usually heavily indicate that it carries meaning far beyond that of simply stalking and killing animals (for example by presenting it as a means through which to affirm human sovereignty over the rest of creation). These narratives typically reach their climax with the violent death of the beast and the glorification of the successful human hunter. Particularly popular (and powerful) during the 1800s and 1900s within colonial powers, this genre is an important progenitor of both the Fecund Dystopia genre and the Melancholy Conservation genre. I begin my analysis of works in this genre with Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick* (1851), which is read as an early and important critique of the hunting genre as a whole, for it is a work explicitly aware of the ultimately economic—rather than honorable—factors driving the hunts for large animals and the deaths of those humans responsible for killing them. *Moby-Dick* also stands as a text in which the act of framing an animal as one’s “enemy”—with all the anthropomorphization that term implies—is not only absurd, but literally lethal. J.H. Patterson’s *The Man-eaters of Tsavo* (1907) and Carl Akeley’s *In Brightest Africa* (1923) autobiographical hunting accounts are next considered as a pair, as these two books present a fascinating shift in attitudes towards the act of hunting from self-assured pride over the kill to melancholy over the supposedly inevitable extinction of a wide variety of beasts from over-hunting (even while hunting is still taking place). I then discuss William Faulkner’s “The Bear” and “The Old People” from *Go Down, Moses* (1942) for its focus on the struggle between the supposed nobility of hunting, the tragedy of losing nature and its creatures, and the centralization of violent human-animal interactions in the formation of a “truly” human subject. This chapter ends with an analysis of David Vann’s *Goat Mountain* (2013) for its presentation of explicitly violent and despairing attitudes towards hunting in 21st century, particularly in light of the role hunting has had in converting landscapes once lauded for their veritable menagerie of animal life into increasingly barren wastelands.

The second chapter and second “stage” of the historical trend I endeavor to articulate is composed of an analysis of the Fecund Dystopia genre, which presents the “refilling” of landscapes colonial-capitalist violence “emptied” with certain “types” of creaturely life that were made to fit processes of accumulation, here exemplified in the factory farm. One of the

offshoots—and logical conclusions—of the Hunting genre, I categorize works falling under this definition as those that are concerned first and foremost with the violent production, reproduction, and intensive control of particular kinds of life. Often explicitly based on a critical lens of the material realities of factory farms, these texts present animal (and human) life not as individualized, but as composed of a mass of beings that are either helpless, victimized herds or crazed, all-consuming hordes. In their pages, reproduction—in both its material, social, and metaphorical forms—is usually achieved only at the cost of pain and death, all while the resulting progeny are made to exist more as raw material than as distinctive beings. I begin this chapter with Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* (1906), which I contend stands as an early and significant Fecund Dystopia fiction for the precise connections it draws between the suffering of humans and the suffering of animals in kinds of life that are made to exist as exploitable flesh. I then read the dystopian science fictions *Oryx & Crake* by Margaret Atwood (2003) and *Animals* by Don LePan (2009) in tandem for their significantly similar imagined futures in which the line between humans and animals has been worn thin as a way to further particular technological and capitalist enterprises. J.M. Coetzee’s *The Lives of Animals* (1999) is next analyzed for its fictional/philosophical struggle with the strange current pseudo-existence of animals in the modern/contemporary world as omnipresent in our food and in our theory yet as less and less present alive in everyday human life. Finally, I end with Timothy Pachirat’s autobiographical text *Every Twelve Seconds* (2011) for its 21st century continuation of Sinclair’s work, particularly in its vivid description of fast-paced mechanical animal slaughter and the deliberate portrayal of human and animal flesh undergoing similar processes within the biocapitalist technologies of the factory farm (if at supposedly different ends of the victim/culprit divide).

The third chapter and sequence of my dissertation’s “story,” the Melancholy Conservation genre, is something that I present as another logical conclusion of the Hunting genre as well as the next “stage” in the biopolitical process that my dissertation is attempting to map out. The texts under this definition—which at times read like a dirge—are works that operate under the premises that a) An animal (or animals) are going extinct and/or suffering as a direct result of human action; b) This extinction is a terrible loss, something to not just be mourned but prevented; and c) This prevention is, for as necessary as the attempt may be, almost inevitably a losing battle. While the past century has witnessed the creation of countless works that can be included under the Melancholy Conservation genre, for this chapter I decided to analyze the emergence and manifestations of this genre under the premise that a relatively concise picture of its uses (and abuses) could be woven from a study of the narratives concerning great apes—especially gorillas and chimpanzees. As such, I begin this chapter with an synonymous analysis of Merian C. Cooper’s films *King Kong* (1933) and *Mighty Joe Young* (1949) for offering insight into how completely the image of the gorilla—and the “natural world” it was claimed to embody—changed rapidly over the beginning to middle of the 20th century from that of a violent, destructive force that must be controlled or annihilated to a gentle victim of humanity’s whims. Jane Goodall’s *In the Shadow of Man* (1971) and Diane Fossey’s *Gorillas in the Mist* (1983) and next examined in tandem, as they provide exemplary pieces of an at the time new hybrid of animal narrative that is both safari adventure, scientific journal, and emotional, even “feminine” framing of what animal life is and how we should treat it. I end this chapter with an analysis of Karen Joy Fowler’s novel *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* (2013) for its careful, and often heart-wrenching, depiction of the generational traumas brought about by the technologies and social systems that make even our closest animal relatives into commodities, and the extinctions this framework all but inevitably ends with. Melancholy

Conservation thus follows the rearticulation of animal life as individualized and worth saving, but almost always in the context that it is already too late to save.

The fourth and final chapter, which was written with a somewhat forward-facing endeavor, covers a branch of post-apocalyptic literature that I've dubbed the Lively Catastrophe genre. The works in this genre—while not the dominant genre within the period I'm focusing on (~20th to the 21st centuries)—remain prescient for operating under explicit recognition of the pain, violence, and loss that has already defined the landscapes in which their protagonists live. Even so, their narratives grant their protagonists a sometimes-surprising amount of autonomy and possibility in their deliberate creations of human—and more than human—relationships. Violent histories, their consequences, and the decisions made within such a framework are paramount. I began this chapter with an analysis of two 20th century works of nature writing that I argue stand as proto-versions of Lively Catastrophe—Mary Austin's *The Land of Little Rain* (1903) and Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974)—because of their images of nature and its creatures in which the violence inherent in the natural world, and these authors' wonder and love of nature in spite of it, is paramount. Marlen Haushofer's post-apocalyptic feminist Robinson-Crusoe-at-the-end-of-the-world novel *The Wall* (1963, English translation 1990) is then examined for its presentation of a protagonist who, even in the grips of personal tragedies and sometimes debilitating physical ailments brought on by excruciatingly hard work, finds means through which to form meaningful—and necessary—connections with nonhuman animals. I end this chapter with an analysis of Hayao Miyazaki's *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1982-1994) for presenting a graphic novel account of a wide variety of relationships—some violent, some tragic, and some beneficial and even loving—that can develop between humans and other creatures even within near-omnicidal conditions.

Under each of these broadly defined genres, I aimed to achieve two objectives: to closely analyze a few specific cases of how animals and their images were (and still are) used by systems of power to control, determine, and even end life on both individual, landscape-wide, and now even world-spanning levels; and secondly, to explore how, despite many embedded and ongoing manifestations of vastly successful control over life—and the mass suffering and death such control usually requires—life in both its human and nonhuman manifestations nevertheless develops sometimes small, sometimes significant, and often surprising means through which to give rise to the potentialities that many a literary work denies, but many others celebrate. I furthermore do not claim that the groupings of my primary texts are complete representatives of these genres, but rather that they act as fruitful examples of what sorts of animal narratives—and what sorts of animal realities—may emerge from the entanglement of fiction's swarm. It is, I argue, within their entanglements—their fluidities, their interplay, their contradictions, and their consequences—that animal narratives have repeatedly shown themselves to have had great significance in their role as interpretations of animal lives, even frequently shaping what sorts of lives and livelihoods are considered permissible, and therefore possible, within human-altered landscapes. While some of this ground has already been covered by other scholars (environmentalist Sean Cubitt, for example, stated that “we *only believe* that animals are [completely] different [from us] does not alter the fact that they have become so, any more than gender or race dissolves as social facts once we understand that they have been constructed through social and historical processes”), I want to put particular emphasis on how the fictive origin for reading animals—created deliberately and intentionally and having been made material though they have been—nevertheless indicate the technology of animal literature is open to alteration (xvi).

In 2014, lawyer Steven Wise went to court on behalf of a chimpanzee named Tommy to sue the ape's owner for having kept Tommy in a cage, arguing that that chimp's right to not be abused as a legal, if nonhuman, "person" had been violated (Feltman).

The same year the "personhood" of a great ape became a matter of legal and national debate, around 150 billion other animals in the United States alone were bred and slaughtered in conditions designed under the framework that those animals were not, in fact, "animals," but rather "'food processes units' and 'protein harvesters'" (Nibert 220). As Don Tyson of Tyson Foods—a major buyer and seller of "Cobb 500" chickens—has explicitly phrased it, "'We're not selling chicks... We're selling meat'" (The Poultry Site).

Animal narratives, embodied and embedded within animal lives and flesh as they become, inspire consequences that are, quite literally, deadly serious. What sorts of narratives may materialize in less lethal interactions between humans and other creatures is thus not only a fascinating question, but one that could greatly shape life, landscape, and even the possibility of a habitable future.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation was often a source of extreme frustration as I brought it from one larval stage to the next over the span of eight years. Yet as a manifestation of the interdisciplinary work some corners of current academia permit and even encourage, I consider it a material embodiment of how blessed I am to get to simultaneously research the sciences and humanities, and to entangle them within the same work. I have numerous figures to thank for nurturing my efforts to combine literary analysis and biology, with professors Mark Payne, Russell Tuttle, and Heather Keenleyside playing particularly important, and particularly generous, roles in my time developing this methodology in my undergraduate years at the University of Chicago.

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I cannot give enough thanks in particular to Professor Donna Jones for acting as the chair of my committee, as my primary mentor throughout my graduate school years, and (if I may dare) as my friend. Her efforts on my behalf—from lengthy meetings over the form of this dissertation to repeated assurances that I was, in spite of my persistent misgivings, meeting all requirements—is something which helped me cross one hurdle after another. As social animals none of us can walk the path to success alone, and I could not have asked for a better guide.

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, who I both love and owe so much to because of this dissertation and otherwise. So thank you to my father Steve Tomasula for his countless acts of essential critique, encouragement, and laughter over the more ridiculous anecdotes of human-animal relations; thank you to my mother Maria Tomasula for her willingness to proofread and for her inexhaustible compassion (and numerous nights of mutually taking breaks and shrieking over horror films!); and a special thanks to my little sister Ava Tomasula y Garcia, whose compassion, commiseration, and mutual love of the cats in our lives is not something I could have done without.

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“Capitalizing on Desire in the Age of the Anthropocene.” Presented at ACLA Conference 2021, Panel “Nature and Morality: (Non)Human Sexuality in Science and Literature.” Online, April 9-11.

“‘I Gladly Assumed the Heavy Load’: The Radical (De)Anthropomorphization of Animal Life in Marlen Haushofer’s *The Wall*.” Presented at ASLE Conference 2019, “Paradise On Fire.” University of California, Davis, Davis, CA, June 26-30.

“Fellow, Matter, Meat: Technology, Ideology, and the Contradictory Construction of Animals in the 21st Century.” Presented at SLSA Conference 2018, “Out of Mind.” Toronto, Canada, November 15-18.

“Fellow, Matter, Meat: Technology, Ideology, and the Contradictory Construction of Animals in the 21st Century.” Presented at *QPANP: Why Do Animal Studies? The Turn to the Quasi-, Post-, Anti-, Non-, Para-*. Chicago, IL, April 26-27.

“Beloved Monstrosities: The History and Controversy of Purebred Dogs.” Presented at SLSA Conference 2015, “After Biopolitics.” Rice University, Houston, TX, November 12-15.

“Fellow, Matter, Meat: Animals in the Crosshairs of New Materialism and the Linguistic Turn.” Presented at SLSA Conference 2015, “After Biopolitics.” Rice University, Houston, TX, November 12-15.

“Gorillas in the Mind: The Construction of a Great Ape.” Presented at SLSA Conference 2014, “Fluid.” SMU, Dallas, TX.

“Between Possessions and Persons: The Humanization of Animals, the Mechanization of Beasts.” Presented at SLSA Conference 2014, “Fluid.” SMU, Dallas, TX.

“Beauty (Un)Preserved: Response to Rachel Poliquin’s *The Breathless Zoo*.” Presented at SLSA Conference 2013, “PostNatural.” University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN, October 3-6.

“Those Who Can(not) Be Seen: The Politics of Sight and the Presentation of Animal Bodies.” Presented at SLSA Conference 2013, “PostNatural.” University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN, October 3-6.

AWARDS & HONORS

2023 Berkeley Lectureship in English Academic Year 2023-24.

2022 University of California Berkeley English Department's Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award.

2021 Received a grant (\$1,000) for University of California Berkeley Course Humanities 295 Art, Ecology, and other Earthly Matters.

2015 Received UC Berkeley's campus-wide Mellon-Chancellor's Fellowship.

2012 Received a Rodehorst Summer Fellowship, grant awarded (\$1,000) for students with outstanding, independent projects.

2012 Selected as a Student Marshal (highest honor conferred by the University of Chicago upon undergraduates), Class of 2013.

TEACHING

Instructor of Record: English R1B-18: Reading and Composition: Writing the (Non)Human (Spring 2023)

Instructor of Record: English R1B-11: Reading and Composition: Nature Writing in English Literature (Fall 2022).

Instructor of Record: English R1B-7: Reading and Composition: Recent Beasts (Spring 2022).

Instructor of Record: English R1B-8: Reading and Composition: Wild(ish) America (Fall 2021).

Instructor of Record: English R1B-16: Reading and Composition: Speculative (Non)Humans (Spring 2020).

Instructor of Record: English R1A-3: Reading and Composition: Inscribing Fear (Fall 2019).

Instructor of Record: English R1A-2: Reading and Composition: Fiction's Swarm (Spring 2019).

Instructor of Record: English R1B-7: Reading and Composition: Nature on the Page (Fall 2018).

Substitute Professor: English 165-4: Neo-Slave Narratives (Spring 2018).

TA: English 166-6: Special Topics: Speculative Fiction (Spring 2018).

TA: English 45C-2: Literature in English: Mid-19th Through the 20th Century (Fall 2017).

Chapter 1: Human Hunters & Animal People

Section One: The Hunted Death of Men and Beasts in Herman Melville's Moby-Dick (1851)

I begin this dissertation with the assertion that while social structures “are present in things,” this is especially true for “animal-things”—items made from the bodies of nonhuman beasts—and their accompanying narratives (Deleuze and Guattari 173). So influential are these animal objects that it is little wonder *Moby-Dick*—“the greatest work of [American] literature”—is concerned equally with the dramas of its human characters and by what means (and for which reasons) they unceasingly risk life and limb to procure that “peculiarly valuable oil” derived from the blubber of whales (Delbanco xv, Melville 222). More so than many another commodity, after all, this animal substance and the light it created was “essential to the rise of modern society” (Roman 66). My particular interest in *Moby-Dick*, however, is not in the raw mechanics of the hunt. Instead, I will focus on the tangled snare of desires and despairs towards human-animal and inter-human relations that Melville contemplated through his whalers. In addition to this, *Moby-Dick* offers an early and important example of worries from the abstractly ecological to the intimately personal that grew from the consequences of commercial hunting as they would complement and clash with hunting as a frequently adulated ideal. For while this era saw hunting being framed as a kind of “sacred knowledge,” whaling in the mid-1800s was by then primarily a powerful business by which that most astonishing of all beasts, the mighty Leviathan, was successfully and commonly converted into a commodity (Herman 3). Even this “portentous and mysterious monster,” in other words, came to be enfolded into a capitalist system that literally and metaphorically rendered it into a being made of “mostly...money” (Melville 8; Roman 68). And just as such a framing of animals does not only affect nonhuman life forms, so the whaling enterprise also kept whalers—many of whom suffered horrific injury and early death—from benefitting from their own labor. Though it was their job to kill and render these beasts, *Moby-Dick*'s whalers cannot help but notice that their own lives were made to bear more than one similarity to the creatures their business viewed and treated as but an easily exploited means of production.

The then-commonplace butchering transformation of living whales into a commodifiable and widely demanded oil was far from the only or the last time in which a market has framed animals as raw resources first and sentient creatures second, if at all. Commercial whaling was, however, an enterprise in which the dangers and very real threat of death connected with hunting were granted few, if any, of the glory or social prestige long associated with “legitimate” (primarily upper-class) manifestations of the practice. Instead—and while it initially reads as macabrely nonsensical that the narrator Ishmael would early on call whaling his “substitute for pistol and ball”—*Moby-Dick* is so engorged with reminders of how often men perished in this line of work that whaling often does read as little more than another form of suicide (Melville 3). Even more than this, a whaler's death is frequently presented as one in which men, those beings “unique and set apart from the animal world,” were themselves physically rendered so completely out of existence that there would not even be a body, or a fragment of a body, left to show they once lived (Demello 30). Ishmael gets his first taste of this human rendering when, accompanied by his bosom friend (the novel's primary “noble savage” figure) Queequeg, he decides to attend mass. Confronted in this space with “silent worshipper[s]” whose “silent grief”

is “insular and incommunicable”—for here the proper rituals of mourning, which require a body, are impossible—the pair find the church defined by “several marble tablets...masoned into the wall on either side of the pulpit” (Melville 39). These stone slabs are all that stands testament to but a few of the men, even entire boats of men, who lost their lives to whaling. Ishmael despairs over the fates of those who “placelessly perished without a grave,” but also insinuates that these men—remembered in at least some extent—were the lucky ones (Melville 41). The “unrecorded accidents in the fishery,” he bitterly claims, are more than can be counted; whaler life is so commonly extinguished and so quickly forgotten that “not one in fifty of the actual disasters and deaths by casualties in the fishery, ever finds a public record at home” (Melville 224). To go whaling was then not simply to risk death, but to risk a painful, untimely death that earns one no glory, wealth, or even remembrance. It is instead a painful path to social and material oblivion.

From around the 17th to 19th centuries—when whale oil held “a pivotal role in the imperial economy”—the whaling industry in its abstract was often praised as ““the boldest and most preserving industry”” (Roman 65, Webster qtd. Roman 66). Indeed, it provided a substance that did nothing less, as founding father John Adams seemed to believe, than keep Western civilization from “slipping back to the Dark Ages” (Roman 65). Much of the text of *Moby Dick* (as shall be shortly discussed) is dedicated to upholding this view. It is also, however, relentless in making explicit how the benefits garnered from whaling were derived from the cheap labor and disposable lives of humans who were made to ultimately fare little better than their animal quarry. Even the whaling ship *Pequod*’s first mate Starbuck is described as having known nothing less than “*hundreds* of men [who] had been so killed” while whaling (Melville 78). This is a number that furthermore includes Starbuck’s father and brother, both of whom underwent what this book frames as the common fate of whalers: first being reduced to “torn limbs,” and then having even these be lost unburied to the “bottomless deeps” (Melville 125). To compound this danger, Melville states that the less exciting demands of industry killed men as surely as the enormous animals they pursued. While the actual “chase” for whales is described as forever “prolonged and exhausting”—even to the point where “many hapless harpooners...actually burst their blood-vessels in the boat”—this only accounts for the hunt itself (Melville 313). For afterwards—all while some of the crew are “intent on spying out more whales”—the rest must render the massive, quickly rotting carcasses into oil in “the severest uninterrupted labors, which know no night,” the men “smoked and burned anew by the combined fires of the equatorial sun and the equatorial try-works,” only to, after they have finally finished creating the valuable oil, be “startled by the cry of ‘There she blows!’ and away they fly to fight another whale, and go through the whole weary thing again” (Melville 469). In the 1600s, one Arctic captain wrote that ““Death and the whalemens touched elbows continuously”” (qtd. Roman 61). With such exhausting, never-ending, and dangerous work being the daily demand of this industry in its 1800s manifestation, Melville suggests that very little had changed in the centuries since then. It is not without reason that Ishmael defines the whole process as “man-killing,” and begs his readers to, for “God’s sake, be economical with your lamps and candles! not a gallon you burn, but at least one drop of man’s blood was spilled for it” (Melville 469, 224). In more ways than one, producing and using the whale oil of the 1800s, as with the crude oil of the 20th and 21st centuries, demanded unending human sacrifice.

Whaling provided the early industrial world with its illumination, but *Moby Dick* is constant in describing how the hidden price of this plentiful light was an ongoing cascade of human misery, ruin, and death. Perhaps feeling permitted by the allowances of fiction to employ explicit anthropomorphism, Melville also writes whalers as not alone in their suffering; their

agony, as he portrays it, was compounded by that of their ““vast and venerable”” prey (Melville 339). He pronounces the whale “the most devout of all beings,” and further describes this creature as so praiseworthy that man should “admire and model thyself after the whale” (Melville 334, 413). And as such, Melville concludes that the beasts are not merely “killed,” but are instead, as he puts it in a phrase dripping with bitter irony, dying “the death of the murdered, in order to light the gay bridals and other merry-makings of men, and also to illuminate the solemn churches that preach unconditional inoffensiveness by all to all” (Melville 392). The hunt’s bloody interruptions of the whales’ animal peace and joy in the name of commerce is even depicted as fostering a lethal hypocrisy against other humans. While there was then (as there still is) an assumption that any parallels between humans and nonhuman creatures is done as a grave insult to the former, in *Moby-Dick* it often functions as a means by which Ishmael speculates on how the pursuit of profit has shaped the world to the detriment of beasts and men alike. In particular, he draws commonalities between whaling and slavery as two trans-Atlantic industries based on the capture and sale of sentient fellow creatures, with the continuation of both trades bringing misery and death to all parties involved.

Before the *Pequod* sets sail, one of its owners remarks that ““no harpooner is worth a straw who aint pretty sharkish”” (Melville, 99). And “sharkishness”—here understood as a dumb violence and self-serving consumption—is rampant throughout the *Pequod*’s crew. Yet rather than even the literal cannibals of the narrative, Melville is primarily concerned in how such “sharkishness” is most often expressed by the ship’s more ostensibly “civilized” members. One scene sees the second mate Stubb—in what can be assumed to be a callback to “noble” hunts in which the upper class dined on the flesh of the creatures they killed—feasting on a whale steak while sharks gorge themselves on the rest of the beast. Watching both man and shark masticate on the same flesh, Ishmael is brought to mind how sharks are the “invariable outriders” of both slave and whale ships, eager for a bite of slaughtered cetaceans or “to be handy in case...[a] dead slave [is] to be decently buried” (Melville 319). The vessels of both occupations throw so much flesh overboard, in other words, that the retinue of sharks following both makes a perfect, if terrible, sense. The similar “sharkishness” of both businesses is insinuated again when Pip, the *Pequod*’s black cabin-boy who possibly started life as a slave, goes mad after being left floating in the ocean for hours after jumping in fear from a speeding whaling boat. He had been told beforehand by Stubb that ““We can’t afford to lose whales by the likes of you; a whale would sell for thirty times what you would...in Alabama”” (Melville 450). As much as Western theory and theology has been dedicated to creating and defending an “absolute divide between human and animal,” such a dissociation quickly falls to the wayside when convenient to justify the “sharkish” demands of commerce (DeMello 36). So rapacious and widespread is this “sharkishness” in both whaling, slavery, and other commercial enterprises that Melville even presents whaling’s categorization of harpooned whales as either “Fast-Fish” (“belonging to the party fast to it”) or “Loose-Fish” (“fair game for anybody who can soonest catch it”) as the ideal metaphor for the underlying politics of the global capitalist system (Melville 434). “What,” he asks, “was America in 1492 but a Loose-Fish...What India to England?...What are the Rights of Man and the Liberties of the World,” in fact, “but Loose-Fish?...And what are you, reader, but a Loose-Fish and a Fast-Fish, too” (Melville 435)? *Moby-Dick* thus suggests that under the commercial system of which whaling was a particularly potent part there is nothing, not even the rights, minds, lives, and indeed deaths of men which will not be devoured in the insatiable quest for profit. Witnessing how men are rendered into nothingness in the name of commerce as commonly as whales, Queequeg, though he has literally consumed other humans, seems well

within his rights to categorize “the practices of [‘civilized’] whalers” as “both miserable and wicked; infinitely more so, than all his father’s heathens” (Melville 62).

Commercial whaling as a kind of hunting did not grant its practitioners any social status or glory. If historical records are to be believed (for their wages “hardly covered the clothes and tobacco many purchased from the ship’s stores” and they often returned “after several years at sea...owing money to the owners”) it barely granted the bulk of them a means by which to survive (Roman 73). Its stipulations were not only often literally “man-killing” but also—as the novel insinuates though even the infamously obsessive whaler Captain Ahab, who calls himself a ““forty-year’s fool”” that had as the hunt demanded lived as ““more a demon than a man””—destroyed every moral impulse that a human may possess in favor of a deliberately encouraged “sharkishness” towards both animals and other humans (Melville 591). With such constant and explicit acknowledgement of the human and animal agony commercial whaling wrought, it then reads as astonishing that the *Pequod’s* crew would be so willing to become, as D.H. Lawrence described them, ““a collection of maniacs”” fanatically obeying Captain Ahab’s orders to hunt Moby Dick even to their destruction (qtd. Selby 38). Yet this strict adherence to Ahab’s urgings becomes comprehensible when paired with Melville’s doggedly paradoxical admiration for whaling as a practice. In fact, for all he thoroughly condemns it in other sections, Melville equally describes whaling as the *only* means by which, despite lived reality, even a common man might become akin to a glorified knight.

It is now a general observation within animal studies circles that human interactions with and thoughts about nonhuman beasts are usually defined by a “cultural ambivalence” rife with numerous intense paradoxes (DeMello 422). This dynamic is unquestionably at work in *Moby-Dick*. It was, in fact, likely sharpened by the historical context of whaling being transformed, as Lewis Mumford phrases it, ““from a brutal but glorious battle into a methodical, slightly banal industry”” (qtd. Selby 47). For as much as Melville through Ishmael is concerned with making clear how whaling men are treated like tools and worked to death in the name of profit, he is simultaneously “all anxiety” to convince “landsmen” that whaling is, far from a “unpoetical and disreputable pursuit,” a necessary and even noble profession (Melville 118). He seems to find whaling’s work in the service of empire, both in discovery (because of whalers “American and European men-of-war now peacefully ride in once savage harbors”) and the production of light (whalers are responsible for “almost all the tapers, lamps, and candles that burn round the globe”), a source of great pride (Melville 120, 119). He even jeeringly enjoins “ye loyal Britons” to remember that, as it is only through the common whaler’s work that land-dwellers have access to whale oil, “we whalers supply you kings and queens with coronation stuff” (Melville 123)! Besides these material realities, Ishmael also readily turns to the realm of myth to assert the whaleman’s exalted place among his fellow humans. He cites a veritable rollcall of mythological heroes in his defense of whaling, defining the Grecian hero Perseus (“the prince of whalers”), St. George (“in many old chronicles whales and dragons...often stand for each other”), and even, “like royal kings of old times” who “find the head-waters of our fraternity nothing short of the great gods themselves,” “divine Vishnoo” as whalers (Melville 395, 396, 397). Fictional as these figures are, it is both noteworthy and understandable that Ishmael/Melville would name such legendary hunters in his defense of whaling. There is no doubt that commercial hunting was devastating the lives and populations of both humans and animals across North America in the mid-nineteenth century. During the same period, however, the “worship of hunters,” based significantly on an exalted ideal of hunting strongly tied to the medieval “preeminent position of hunting in the cultural and social codes of the ruling class,” was undergoing a great resurgence in

the United States (Herman 5; Smets and Van Den Abeele 65). Hunting, even within the realities of commercial hunting, held on to and bolstered its perceived ties to the most “noble” (or at least the wealthiest and most powerful) of humans. It is within the perimeter of these ideals that Ishmael, low on the hierarchy of whalers as he is, feels confident in declaring himself “the attendant or *page* of Queequeg” (Melville 233, italics mine). He is, within this frame, not simply an underpaid whaler scorned by his employers and society as a whole, but a veritable knight in training. Imagining the “many great demi-gods and heroes [who] have shed distinction” upon whaling, Ishmael is transported into a kind of bliss “with the reflection that I myself belong...to so emblazoned a fraternity” (Melville 395).

Melville through Ishmael dedicates lengthy pages to decrying the rapacious toll whaling and its ever-increasing commercial demands took on both men and beasts. Yet rather than condemning hunting wholesale, he draws upon images of an idealized, even mythologized form of hunting to express a strong desire (fabricated as it may be) for “the knightly days of our profession, when we only bore arms to succor the distressed, and not to fill men’s lamp-feeders” (Melville 395). It is this desire for a return to knightly hunting that can also explain the novel’s paradoxical eagerness to portray whales—even while other sections frame these beasts as the literally objectified raw resources of commerce or as innocent victims to humanity’s rapaciousness—as eternal monsters of “unspeakable terrors” (Melville 498). Besides describing whales as “immortal” (a status Melville gives them in spite of noting well-documented human-caused animal annihilations, as with the “wondrous extermination” of the Illinois bison), Ishmael/Melville is at pains to prove how these creatures were fully capable of being “sufficiently powerful, knowing, and judiciously malicious, as with direct aforethought to stave in, utterly destroy, and sink a large ship” (Melville 503, 502, 224). Melville includes a lengthy and detailed footnote composed of testaments from the historical figure Owen Chase, who saw his ship *Essex* wrecked in 1820 through the “maliciousness of a whale,” and who insisted that the cetacean seemed to have done so in “revenge for [the] sufferings” of its harpooned companions (Melville 224, Chase qtd. Melville 225). In his own fiction, Melville further creates the sense that such “maliciousness” was not a one-off event by citing actual notorious named whales in “Timor Jack” (who reportedly “smashed every whaleboat sent after him”) and “Don Miguel”—along with a few that he appears to have invented in “New Zealand Tom” and “Morquan”—and insinuating that *all* of these creatures were infamous man-killing animals who not only possessed a human-like capacity for rage and revenge but who also succeeded time after time again in destroying the boats and lives of those humans who attempted to harm them (Darby 86; Melville 223). *Why* Melville would do so becomes clear when considering his desire for a whaler’s profession to be framed as knightly. In fact, Ishmael/Melville speaks in almost jealous terms of soldiers, who are described as those “valiant butchers [who] cannibally [carve] each other’s live meat with carving-knives all gilded and tasseled,” and who are nevertheless “butchers...whom the world invariably delights to honor” (Melville 319, 118).

Though he may write derisively of soldiers in that instance, *Moby-Dick* presents numerous parallels between warfare and hunting, and in doing so follows a common line of thinking in the 1800s that framed both as “essential components of a necessary masculine ‘social constitution’” (Mangan and McKenzie 9). In so doing, the book comes to strongly suggest that the glory granted to one should be given to the other. The whaling ship *Pequod* on which most of the novel is set, for example, takes its name, as Ishmael tells his readers they will “no doubt remember,” from “an Indian tribe obliterated in a seventeenth-century war with the Puritans” (Melville 77; Delbanco xxi). To complete the picture, this ship is “appareled...in the chased

bones of her *enemies*” (i.e. the whales), in this way literally embodying in both name and structure the bloody triumph of Euroamerican colonialism and commercialism over indigenous humans and animals alike (Melville 78, italics mine). In another instance of this novel likening the wholesale deaths of whales and Amerindians as triumphs of the same conquest, Melville draws a direct comparison between the actions of “valiant whaling captains” who set off with the express purpose of killing boat-sinking whales and the historical Captain Church’s hunt for “that notorious murderous savage Annawon, the headmost warrior of the Indian King Philip” (Melville 223). Whaling, in other words, is just as necessary as warfare for the success of American prosperity and civilization. The glory granted to those who battle against the human “savages” is likewise due to those who clash with their animal counterparts.

With whales and Amerindians—especially the most “war-like” of them—being deliberately framed as the enemies of American empire, the novel’s defining obsession with hunting down the eponymous white whale Moby Dick becomes comprehensible. Moby Dick first defies the “place” of whales as a raw resource in the service of U.S. industry by possessing, animal though he is, the “intelligent malignity” necessary to successfully turn the tide against human whalers (Melville 199). Even worse than this, at least from the viewpoint of American enterprise, is that unlike other whales (or even human Amerindians) Moby Dick has emerged victorious from *all* attempts to take his life. In rhetoric that attempts to capture the enraging “unfairness” of the situation, Melville writes that Moby Dick is free to swim off “into the serene, exasperating sunlight” after he has torn apart both whalers and their boats as easily “as a mildly cruel cat her mouse” (Melville 199, 598). The whalers, human though they are and part of a largely successful colonial enterprise though they set out to be, are meanwhile left in “pitches of inflamed, distracted fury...amid the chips of chewed boats, and the sinking limbs of torn comrades” (Melville 199). As both a nonhuman beast and an indigenous lifeform who destroyed every attempt to take his life and render him into a “serviceable” form for U.S. benefit, Moby Dick embodies a grave insult to American empire. His very existence seems to shake even the assumptions of Manifest Destiny, which by the 1850s stated that American Anglo-Saxons were “a separate, innately superior people...destined to bring good government, commercial prosperity, and Christianity to the American continents and to the world...and inferior races [and animals] were doomed to subordinate status or extinction” (Horsman 2). Throughout *Moby-Dick* many figures try to dissuade Ahab and his crew from pursuing the white whale, with Starbuck in particular declaring it “blasphemous” to seek vengeance ““on a dumb brute...that simply smote thee from blindest instinct”” (Melville 178). Yet what these protests fail to address is how the above-mentioned traits make Moby-Dick in his monstrousness—his overwhelming, maddening, ability as a nonhuman being to easily take human life while overturning all attempts to take his—a desirable target for the whaler of the industrial era. This would be a man, after all, who often risks death, is scorned for his work of rendering beasts into commodities, and yet, unable or unwilling to condemn the system he supports, is looking for some way to gain honor through his profession. Killing a common-day whale was but part of the business. Killing Moby Dick would prove one not only a sure soldier of empire, but also make one a legend, a highly respected figure who through his hunting prowess has proven his worth.

It is, in other words, a chance to emulate the mythic hunters of an idealized past during a time in which hunting was greatly glorified that Ahab’s unrelenting hunt for Moby Dick offers his crew. This is apparent from Ahab’s first stirring speech, in which he cries that he and his “brave” men will chase ““that accursed white whale...’till he spout black blood and rolls fin out”” (Melville 177). And indeed, at the end of his speech all the whalers go into a sort of frenzy

against Moby Dick, Ahab having successfully framed his obsession not as a personal vendetta but as a point of “common resentment” which is then easily elevated “to the uncommon level of heroic virtue” (Delbanco xx). It is in this elevation, in this signaling to his crew that their dreams of glory will be fulfilled under his leadership, that Ahab makes his control over his crew an “irresistible dictatorship” (Melville 160). As Ishmael himself describes it, “Ahab’s quenchless feud” bore such a perfect outer resemblance to the imagined hunts of bygone days, indeed to the hunts deemed necessary to build empires, that this one man’s relentless vendetta against an animal “seemed mine” (Melville 194).

To men who every day lived what it means to be treated as a disposable resource in a grinding enterprise, a figure such as Ahab—who expresses nothing but contempt for “those miserly owners” of the Nantucket whaling market all while offering a chance to embark on a veritable quest that seems almost straight from a book of legends—would be an immensely attractive figure (Melville 517). Ahab explicitly understands this: as he mutters to himself, the hunt for the white whale “breeds a certain generous knight-errantism in [the whalers] ...for the love of it they give chase to Moby Dick” (Melville 231). Yet this is not a story which, as with many another hunting narrative written before and after *Moby-Dick*, ends with the ferocious beast slain and its killers triumphant, basking in the proof of their skill and worth. Instead, chapter by chapter Melville strips away every facet of imagined nobility from Ahab’s character and motives so that he is ultimately not offering an affirming alternative to the unceasing demands of industrialization, but rather presents but another form of destructive selfishness. Not altering his course despite one death after another, Ahab ultimately instead refuses all responsibility, insisting that it is no lesser power than God that “does that thinking, does that living, and not I” (Melville 578). And just as he claims his obsessions and demands come from acting “under orders,” that Ahab is in fact “the Fates’ lieutenant,” so he insists his crew “obeyest mine” (Melville 611). While the men of the *Pequod* are at first eager to follow Ahab as the individual who promised them the dignity due to knightly hunters, they but find themselves treated yet again as “tools,” their only purpose to “accomplish [Ahab’s] object” (Melville 611, 230). Ahab even cries in the last chase for Moby Dick that his crew are “not other men, but my arms and legs; and so obey me” (Melville 618). The men, for their own part, say nothing in reply but simply move to carry out his deranged will of encompassing destruction. As dehumanized as the crew become, as much as Starbuck—the man who most explicitly and blatantly challenges Ahab’s orders—wonders whether “this crazed old man [should] be tamely suffered to drag a whole ship’s company down to doom with him,” in the end none of the men are capable of acting even according to self-preservation (Melville 559). Not just their actions, but even their thoughts seem paralyzed from even imagining how they might think or act outside of the deadly paradigm between the whaling market’s indifferent, lethal insistences and Ahab’s self-absorbed, equally lethal demands. They are men who thus seem inevitably coerced into committing, as Ishmael hinted from the beginning, a form of mass suicide.

The end of the hunt—the third of three chases in which Ahab and his crew have every chance to turn back—is full of forewarnings. And yet they press on to a final, and Ahab would insist inevitable, confrontation. Ahab darts “his fierce iron...and his far fiercer curse into the hated whale” (Melville 620). Moby Dick responds with “swift vengeance” and “eternal malice,” and the *Pequod* and her crew, with the sole, quite random, exception of Ishmael, are utterly annihilated (Melville 622, 624). Readers are left to wonder again why the men pressed on, seemingly hell-bent on rushing to their deaths. Yet it is with this ending that Melville indicates the deepest tragedy of *Moby-Dick*, and indeed of hunting under empire and capitalism as a

whole: that when torn between the intolerable poles of a culture of brutal commodification and the revelation of the idealization of past-era knightliness as but a tool for narcissistic despots, the men accepted, despairing all the while, a status as nothing more than the instruments of others. The physical rendering of men that Melville abhorred, in other words, indicated to be accompanied by an internal rendering of a human's sense of self-worth into self-objectification. The United States had even then held itself up as a bastion of freedom and self-determination, where hunting existed as a particularly potent practice through which to exercise and defend such "human" prerogatives. The novel's last scene of Ishmael, floating upon a coffin and left an "orphan" by every institution and ideal he had trusted, however, seems to say that even here one's life, as with the animals, was never permitted to be yours (Melville 625).

Section Two: Material Constructions and Literary Effects: The Bestly Intensification of Eco-Melancholia from The Man-Eaters of Tsavo (1907) to In Brightest Africa (1923)

There was, as *Moby-Dick* indicates, some awareness of how thoroughly hunting could cause the destruction of both men and beasts. Even so, this profoundly melancholy text is significantly defined by the then-commonplace framing of hunting as a practice with "elite and privileged associations" (Poliquin 162). It is as such perhaps to be expected that the detrimental aspects of hunting as a tool of colonial-capitalism would be mostly ignored, at least while they could be, throughout the 1800s and early 1900s in favor of a ruthlessly optimistic vision. During these years (and in keeping with such a vision), both Great Britain and North America witnessed a high demand for "dramatic tales" of hunting in landscapes undergoing colonization straight from the pens of the officer-hunters who maintained the day-to-day brutalities of empire (Mangan and McKenzie 21). In these works, the stalking of animals and conflicts against colonized humans were often explicitly linked. Indeed, written accounts of such exploits—along with the masses of taxidermied beasts made from these "official" hunter's animal "trophies"—worked in tandem to definitively "prove" that "violence against man and beast [was] a necessary adjunct to the spread of civilization" (Mangan and McKenzie 231). In the words of historian Harriet Ritvo, taxidermied beasts "offered both dramatic background for and persuasive corroboration of [the officer hunter's] stories"; narratives on the benefits of Western colonial civilization, in other words, were accompanied by "animal"—and therefore "natural"—proofs of their veracity (252). As natural historian Rachel Poliquin has noted, taxidermied animal-things, understood as embodying non-subjective accounts about animals and their histories (they were, after all, made from the creatures themselves) have been "serviceable for all manner of propaganda and proclamations of truth" (109). Yet this section is concerned less with the power of such a framing of hunting's purpose than it is with its ephemerality. Paired together, the two hunting narratives here considered—J.H. Patterson's *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo* (1907) and Carl J. Akeley's *In Brightest Africa* (1923)—stand as remarkable examples of period-specific hunting stories not because of their unique characteristics, but because they are illustrative of a rapidly changing sentiment towards hunting due in large part to a rapidly emptying environment. The swift shift in tone illustrated by these two texts, from triumph to melancholy, indicate early and ever-deepening cracks in the optimistic perceptions of hunting's effects. Even the perpetrators of empire, as it were, could finally no longer ignore the detrimental consequences their kind of rapacious hunting was having upon animals and their landscapes. Yet as with Melville some fifty years prior, the recorders of such mass creaturely exterminations prove themselves incapable, or unwilling, to even imagine acting otherwise.

To begin, as it were, at the beginning of the end, I will start with the hunting narrative composed by chief engineer Lieutenant Colonel John Henry Patterson based on his adventures in 1898 while overseeing the construction of a railway through the Tsavo region of Kenya and published less than a decade later. Of all the many autobiographical hunting stories composed during the late 1800s-early 1900s, this account has often been described as one of the most exciting and influential. Inspiring multiple books and films—and backed in its veracity by the taxidermied skins and polished skulls of the eponymous man-eating lions, animal-objects which are still given a pride of place at Chicago’s Field Museum—this work dazzles its readers with descriptions of the numerous trials and tribulations Patterson underwent in his months-long battle against the beasts. By any measure, the creatures were indeed frightening foes. The attacks of these two ferocious, enormous apex predators were so brutal that they not only halted the construction of the railroad, but by the end of the ordeal they had reportedly killed and devoured a minimum of 28 and a maximum of 135 people over a nine-month period (Peterhans and Gnoske 7). While his text is almost the opposite in tone to Patterson’s, Akeley described the lions of Tsavo in his own hunting narrative as the “most famous man-eaters,” and that Patterson’s “classic account of them is one of the great animal stories of the world” (Akeley 61). Yet for all that it has been portrayed as a hunting story of singular endeavor and emotion, *The Man-eaters of Tsavo* is a very typical embodiment of the tropes that defined popular colonial hunting texts of this era. This is true not only for the animals being hunted, but also with the indigenous humans Patterson encountered and, as a soldier of empire, exploited. In fact, in this text (as with many others of this era) the African native’s “animal” indifference to human suffering, and bloodily ravenous appetite, are depicted as so extreme that a reader would feel this work’s constant comparisons between Africa’s humans and Africa’s beasts to be perfectly justified.

As could be expected for a narrative composed during the ascension of the adventure romance (which often featured “encounters with bloody-minded savages”) *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo* is a text that spends as much time recounting the violence and barbarity of non-white humans as it does that of Africa’s fauna (Atwood, “Introduction,” xvi). Besides exported Indian workers attempting to murder him (Patterson is only saved from this “diabolical scheme” by a “fortunate accident”), Patterson also writes that while the lions devoured the workers “with painful frequency...the coolies appeared not to take much notice of the dreadful deaths of their comrades” (56, 58, 32). Native Africans are presented as even worse. Before “the advent of British rule,” Patterson writes, the Masai were constantly making raids “on the weaker tribes in the country” that were so destructive that “nothing of any kind was left alive” in their wake (230). A similar level of violence and callousness to human suffering among the Wa Kamba is made particularly explicit in an anecdote in which a Wa Kamba hunter in Patterson’s party was dragged into a river by a crocodile. As Patterson reports on *this* act of man-eating, his gunboy Mahina merely “philosophically remarked that...it was only a *washenzi* (savage), whose loss did not much matter; and the other three Wa Kamba certainly did not appear to be affected by the incident, but calmly possessed themselves of their dead companion’s bow and quiver of poisoned arrows” (151). Yet it is particularly in his retellings of hunting expeditions that Patterson makes the most metaphorically and literally visceral distinction between himself and the African natives. For in addition to their aforementioned cruelty and callousness, Patterson regales his readers with graphic descriptions of African natives displaying their savagery through the frenzied, animalistic consumption of raw flesh.

There are multiple scenes in *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo* which depict in lurid detail just how common the African “savage’s” hunger for bloody meat is, and every one of them follows the

same narrative pattern: Patterson—who, as expected of an officer-hunter, would “go off on a short shooting and exploring expedition whenever I had the opportunity”—kills an animal for sport, and the Africans in attendance rush to devour the beast almost as soon as it hits the ground (Patterson 131). A “party of starving Wa Kamba” make “a ravenous meal on the raw flesh” of a leopard Patterson killed; after he drops a Grant’s gazelle “the Basoga swooped down on him, ripped him open, and devoured huge chunks of the raw and still quivering flesh, lapping up the warm blood in the palms of their hands”; after he shoots his first hippo, his Wa Kamba attendants “feasted ravenously on the flesh” (Patterson 116, 215-216, 140). Patterson, for his own part, turned “with gratitude to the hot coffee and cakes which Mabruki had meanwhile prepared” (140). As with many another hunting narrative of this era, the running theme and underlying message could not be more obvious: Patterson, being a sportsman, a European, and a colonialist, is the very personification of progress, decency, and civilization. The African natives around him, in direct contrast, are but one step up from the beasts on which they feed. Their inherently savage “nature” necessitates the hand of European colonization—here embodied in Patterson—to lead them to a state of at least semi-humanity.

With such savagery at constant play among its human inhabitants, a reader would find it unsurprising that a pair of man-eating lions could do quite well for themselves within the dark heart of Africa. Yet these creatures are also depicted as far more than simply lions, or even as frighteningly successful man-eaters. Patterson (and this despite the time he gives to making himself out as a man of reason) dedicates multiple sections to describing how thoroughly convinced both the Indian workers and African natives were that the beasts were part of a supernatural order, “not real animals at all, but devils in lions’ shape” (20). This is a sentiment Patterson does little to assuage, insinuating instead that it was all too understandable. In his own words, these lions were far from simple beasts; they showed “a complete contempt for human beings” (except “as food”) and seemed to possess “an extraordinary and uncanny faculty of finding out our plans beforehand” (28, 26). He even admits that the lions—who seemed to bear “a charmed life”—soon had him “at my wits’ end to know what to do” (68). Indeed, after his gun misfired (Patterson repeatedly informs his audience that this was a “borrowed weapon”) on the “first occasion during all these trying months...[at] a fair chance at one of these brutes,” we are told that “the Indians were more than ever confirmed in their belief that the lions were really evil spirits, proof against mortal weapons” (87, 85, 87). Yet there is another aspect of this supernatural tie worth noting—at least, Patterson certainly thought so. It is not simply that the lions were abstract “devils.” Instead, as Patterson explicitly notes, the workers “were quite convinced” that the lions were “the angry spirits of two departed native chiefs [who] had taken this form in order to protest against a railway being made through their country, and by stopping its progress to avenge the insult thus shown to them” (21). The lions, that is, were written to serve not just as lions, or as exemplars of Africa’s animal savagery. They were also inscribed into serving as symbols of any being—human or nonhuman—that would go against colonial enterprises.

It has already been noted that within any hunting narrative a hunter best proves his worth through overcoming the ferocity, cunning, and strength of his animal prey. Due to their own hunting prowess against humans, the man-eaters of Tsavo were easy to depict as bloodthirsty monsters so clever that they could serve as beastly stand-ins for pre-colonial forms of authority and indigenous efforts against colonial projects. As such, they provided the perfect stage on which for Patterson to not only prove his personal worth as a hunter, but in so doing to take on the highly desired mantle of a heroic and self-sacrificing officer-hunter. In saving the savages around him from their own incompetence, brutality, and untamed landscapes, Patterson’s actions and the

resultant widely publicized narrative “proved” the necessity of his particular brand of civilization. The lions make their worth as adversaries clear through their ability to take “man after man...without ever once giving [Patterson] a chance of a shot at them” (40). They even hunted *him* so successfully that Patterson only survived through a number of “very lucky and very narrow escape[s]” (40). Yet Patterson stolidly forged ahead, for he felt “that it was a duty that had to be undertaken, as the men looked to me for protection” (67). And the reward was worth the effort: Patterson, persevering and emerging triumphant, recounts how after he finally killed one of the man-eaters “every man in camp...prostrated themselves on the ground before me, saluting me with cries of ‘*Mabarak! Mabarak!*’ which I believe means ‘blessed one’ or ‘savior’” (91). The celebration attached to the death of the second man-eater is recorded in a similar way, with the “natives” also giving Patterson the title of “‘devil killer’” (103). Even better, Patterson writes, was that his workmen’s attitude towards him completely changed; it was “amusing, indeed” that instead of “wishing to murder me, as they once did, they could not now do enough for me” (103). They even presented him with “my most highly prized and hardest won trophy,” a “beautiful silver bowl, as well as with a long poem written in Hindustani describing all our trials and my ultimate victory” (103). Besides his personal account, Patterson also includes a lengthy excerpt from an article in *The Spectator* of March 3, 1900, entitled “The Lion that Stopped the Railway.” It is a piece filled with praise and constant comparisons between Patterson and lion hunters both historical and mythical. Patterson, the paper states, was a “‘champion,’” a “‘hero and deliverer’” whose story was so astonishing that if “‘the whole body of lion anecdote, from the days of the Assyrian Kings till the last year of the nineteenth century, were collated and brought together, it would not equal in tragedy or atrocity, in savageness or in sheer insolent contempt for man...the story of these two beasts’” (qtd. Patterson 106, 105). And so it was that at the end of this hunt, the world was organized as empire desired: with the destruction of threats to colonial projects, the willing subjection of the natives, and the officer-hunter standing triumphant over all odds, his exploits providing both written witness and material animal proof that colonization could only ever be a force for good.

Offering as it did a singular figure that an individual could adopt like a costume and play out in the field with obvious beneficial consequences for colonial enterprises, it is understandable that the figure of the officer-hunter, “portrayed as a manly, patriotic protector, had a long life” (Mangan and McKenzie 232). Over the course of a century and well into the next, exotic “big-game hunting, with its underlying subplot of white man versus the dark unknown, was embedded in the imperial enterprise, and from [the mid-1800s] onward, hunters pictured amid heaps of recent kills became the archetypal colonial adventurers” (Poliquin 88). Yet for all that it fully embodies these tropes and expectations, *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo* can be placed as one of the last “great” works of this powerful rhetorical trend. Many of the tropes of the colonial hunting narrative (in particular those that maintained the racist perceptions of Africa’s indigenous peoples) remained widespread throughout hunting narratives of the 1900s. Yet a number of texts—exemplified here by the taxidermist and conservationist Carl E. Akeley’s *In Brightest Africa*, published less than two decades after *The Man-Eaters to Tsavo*—were beginning to bump into the material limits of nature’s previously imagined endless bounty. The relatively sudden lack of actual animals in once happy hunting grounds forced the realization “that many species were vanishing, and at a rapid rate” (Poliquin 104). At the time Patterson composed his story, Africa may have been a land of savagery and danger, but it was also filled with—if his narrative is anything to go by—“a wonderful variety of game” that “abounded in all directions” (Patterson 148). In a move reminiscent of Melville’s take on whale populations, Patterson even brings up the possibility of

mass animal extinction and just as quickly dismisses it. In fact, he feels confident in claiming that “so long as [a then-newly established game reserve] is...maintained as a sanctuary, there can be no danger of any of [Africa’s animals] becoming extinct” (191-192). For Akeley, this could not be further from the truth.

Numerous African hunting narratives present the continent—along with its human and animal inhabitants—as inherently hostile. In a multitude of scenes Akeley sticks to this perception, even providing his audience with gory descriptions of the two instances—first by a bull elephant (“I had a realization that I was being crushed, and as I looked into one wicked little eye above me I knew I could expect no mercy from it”) and in another getting badly mauled by a leopard—in which he is almost slain by the tusks and teeth of Africa’s wildlife (48). His injuries from these struggles were horrific; between a broken nose, a cheek “cut so that it hung down, exposing my teeth,” and an arm “chewed into an unpleasant sight,” Akeley emerged from both encounters barely alive and looking, as he put it, “hardly worth saving” (51, 102, 51). Yet even with such bloody accounts of his experience with the lethal potential of Africa’s creatures, Akeley repeatedly insists that there is much to be admired in these beasts. Indeed, the “virtues” of the “vanishing Africa” animals (such as “their courage, defence of their young, [and] devotion to the safety of their families”) are described in the prologue of his work as “simple, homely virtues which are so much needed to-day in our civilization” (Osborne xi). These beasts’ perceived high propensity for violence, in a noteworthy move away from the then-standard hunting narrative, is further dismissed as a false perception peddled by “sensational writers...who have been tempted to exaggerate their danger for commercial reasons” (Osborne xi). Akeley even refers to elephants and gorillas—two creatures long understood to be among Africa’s most dangerous—as his “particular friends” (111). It is in fact within Akeley’s lengthy description of his first hunt for gorillas that the vast difference in perception between himself and hunters but a few decades before makes itself most clear.

A “gorilla expedition,” Akeley wrote, “acquires a tremendous fascination” because its target was both “one of the most remarkable and least known large animals in the world” as well as “the nearest to man of any other member of the animal kingdom” (190). Records of past gorilla hunts, which Akeley quotes extensively from, also do much to elevate the sense of excitement, mystery, and danger that he initially attaches to his own endeavors to “collect” the beasts. He was particularly conscious of the writings of the nineteenth-century zoologist/anthropologist Paul Belloni Du Chaillu—who has gone down in history as the first white man to hunt gorillas—and includes numerous and lengthy passages from Du Chaillu’s account on how the gorilla is both “the king of the African forest” and a source of “lively fear” (qtd. Akeley 194). As with du Chaillu’s statement that he was “never...more excited in my life” than while hunting gorillas—and indeed like Patterson’s own feelings while lion hunting—Akeley also reports that it was “with no little emotion” that he first saw, and first shot, a wild gorilla (qtd. Akeley 194, Akeley 195). Indeed, he “could not [have hoped] for a more thrilling and dramatic episode than the taking of my first gorilla” (222).

For all this adherence to numerous tropes that defined his predecessor’s words, Akeley’s own hunting account contains a sense of explicit guilt for the death he is dealing. Pleased with the gorilla “specimens” as he was (rather than hunting gorillas for the acquisition of personal “trophies” or to save the lives of helpless natives, Akeley set off on his expedition specifically to use the art of taxidermy to preserve gorillas for posterity)—and describing the cry of the gorilla as “devilish” as he did—Akeley also wrote that he “felt almost like a murderer” for shooting the beasts (195). The animals fleeing from his gun are even described as appearing “like men running for their lives” (195). The death of one gorilla that Akeley shot, a four-year-old male, is given a

particularly tragic description: “As he ran about, one of the guides speared him. I came up before he was dead. There was a heartbreaking expression of piteous pleading on his face. He would have come to my arms for comfort” (217). Instead of existing only as a display of his mastery over nature and thus his superiority over the landscape, Akeley’s presentation of his gorilla hunt makes space for the pain of the animals being slain, even depicting their demise as akin to a tragedy.

In another move away from his predecessors, Akeley is unambiguously aware of the African hunting adventure as a genre, and makes a point of repeatedly critiquing its tropes, particularly with the perceptions of gorillas and Africa that came with it. He even states that one of his primary goals for his own gorilla hunt (besides collecting museum-quality specimens of these creatures) was to overturn the perception, “firmly established in the popular mind,” that gorillas were “among the most powerful and ferocious animals on earth” (196). He aimed to achieve this by “taking ladies with no previous hunting experience of any kind into a gorilla country in Central Africa” (196). While this plan was initially “looked upon as madness,” Akeley repeatedly and triumphantly notes in his retelling that the gorillas he encountered and killed constantly failed to verify assumptions about their barbarity (196). To give his words on the matter: “these animals should have been excessively dangerous... Yet I could see no signs of ferocity... of the two, *I was the savage and aggressor*” (216, italics mine). If they were following a hunting narrative’s expected plot, the gorillas, Akeley states, *should* have “charged that twenty-five yards in a few seconds and given [him and his friend] a chance to defend the ladies heroically from threatened death. However, [the gorilla] didn’t know his part, for it was evident that his one idea was to go away” (229). Far from being a demonic resident of frightening and untamed jungles, even a massive silverback is portrayed within *In Brightest Africa* as “normally a perfectly amiable and decent creature” that “will keep away from a fight until he is frightened or driven into it” (196).

Taking “ladies to hunt gorillas” had, Akeley states, caused a certain amount of irritation among other hunters; “if I showed that ladies with no previous hunting experience could hunt gorillas,” he explains, “much of the heroics which have attached to African big-game hunting would begin to wane” (226). Yet this was exactly what Akeley hoped for, and he presents himself as delighted that his enterprise resulted in a “popular illusion gone to smash”; as “a naturalist interested in preserving African wild life, I was glad to do anything that might make killing animals less attractive” (232, 226). It is perhaps for this reason that Akeley goes so far as to defend even man-eating lions from the absolute hatred that is usually their lot. Lions, he writes, “are not savage in the sense of killing for the mere sake of killing,” and further states that “lions are never the aggressors”; it is almost always human action against lions that must first prompt them to kill members of our species (60, 62). He even writes that while the “most famous man-eaters, the lions of Tsavo,” did assuredly take “a terrible toll,” they were not hunting humans out of malice (61). Instead, and for as hard as it is for humans to think of themselves as akin to “prey” species, the big cats were simply “killing for food just as if they were killing zebra” (61). Akeley also insists numerous times that animals “in their natural state are not instinctively afraid of man, but they have learned from sad experience that man is bad medicine” (126). In recognizing the irrevocable fear and death he is dealing—even the destruction of a kind of peaceable kingdom he seems to love—and hunter and collector though he was, Akeley writes he found “but little enjoyment in shooting any kind of animal” (126). As with the aforementioned gorilla hunt, it always “made me feel a great deal like a murderer” (114).

For all of his criticisms and endeavors against it, Akeley took it as an inescapable fact that the gorilla, the elephant, and so many other creatures, as “easy and highly prized prey to the ‘sporting’ instinct,” were on the “way to extinction” (248). It is in a final contemplation of a slain

gorilla that the underlying melancholy that runs through Akeley's work makes itself most explicit: the forest in which he stood was "a veritable fairyland," but even in such an almost unimaginable Eden, and by his own actions, "our great primitive cousin, whose sanctuary we had invaded, lay dead at our feet. That was the sad note" (231). Akeley's fear of gorilla extinction—and his desire and drive to do something against it—did result in the still-extant gorilla sanctuary composed of the mountains Mikeno, Karisimbi, and Visoke. And this legacy is an important one, for these mountains compose part of the contemporary Virunga national park, home to the last mountain gorillas and where Diane Fossey did much of her groundbreaking research in gorilla behavior (as analyzed later in this dissertation). Yet *In Brightest Africa* is defined by resignation, a continual sense that all efforts to save gorillas or indeed any of Africa's creatures from annihilation would prove futile. Nor was this resignation unfounded. Africa's rapidly altered landscapes and the shockingly abrupt absence of their native animals stood testament to how quickly entire species might be driven to oblivion. When recounting one trip by train that he and his party took (in a scene that is the inverse of the first act of hunting in Patterson's narrative, in which while likewise traveling across Africa by train one of Patterson's companions got a lucky shot on an ostrich, "an exceptionally fine specimen," that was running parallel to the locomotive) Akeley writes that "on this entire railroad journey we did not see a single head of game—so rapidly has African wild life disappeared in the south" (Patterson 14; Akeley 198). The exact same situation defined the Ruindi Plains in the Belgian Congo, which were described to Akeley as "wonderful game country" (56). By the time Akeley encountered it, this landscape was "a vast graveyard. There, too, commercialism has played its part in exterminating the animals...[and] only a pitiful remnant of the splendid animals who once made it their home remains" (56). It was this glaringly material and unavoidable reality that underlined all of Akeley's work, from his expansive taxidermy museum collections to his autobiographical hunting account. He lived "constantly aware of the rapid and disconcerting disappearance of African wild life," and killed the very animals he claimed as friends to create "a great museum exhibit" so that there might be some "permanent and artistic form" left of the creatures he loved long after their living counterparts were driven into the void of extinction (Akeley 251, 252).

As quickly as he worked to make his taxidermy exhibit a reality, Akeley's anxiety that it would never materialize intertwines at a fever pitch with his assumptions on looming mass extinction to define the last section of *In Brightest Africa*. "Twenty-five years hence," he writes morosely, "the development of such a hall will be...impossible" because "the African animals are so rapidly becoming extinct that the proper specimens will not then be available" (253). He sincerely believed that the annihilation of Africa's beasts was so unpreventably swift that even before he finalized an exhibit starring his taxidermy animal-things, "some of the species represented"—that is, entire types of living animals— "will have disappeared" (254). Akeley's hunting account is defined by fierce criticisms of the practice. His stated goal for the exhibit he killed his "friends" to achieve was twofold. In his own words, he aimed to not only preserve a remnant of Africa's wildlife, but to "tell the story of jungle peace, a story that is sincere and faithful to the African beasts as I have known them," and that would, as a result, "obliterate" the "traditions of jungle horrors and impenetrable forests" (254). Yet by his own account, this is an endeavor incapable of saving the animals themselves. "The game," as Akeley states over and over again, and as tragic as he may find it, "*must* eventually disappear as the country is settled" (56, italics mine). In Akeley's account, it is not only a less destructive kind of hunting that has been rendered out of the question. Mass extinction, once believed an impossibility, is here now explicitly recognized and understood as an ongoing reality. Yet even when firmly framed as a tragedy against

which one must struggle, it is simultaneously presented as necessary for “civilization”—at least as colonialism and commercialism would construct it—to advance.

Section Three: Sins of the Father(s): Hunting, Social Horror, and Nature-Culture's Demise in William Faulkner's Go Down, Moses (1942)

As exemplified by the sharp turn from the cheery optimism of *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo* to the mournful anxiety of *In Brightest Africa*, the 20th century was characterized (as is every era) by intense paradoxes in prominent framings of animal life and the broader natural world. Such paradoxes, as I have attempted to illustrate, were and are often especially stark in regard to hunting and its attendant literature. Hunting was how men proved their dignity and worth; hunting was but a means to wallow in bloodshed; hunting was a route by which the best kind of civilization was spread; hunting brought nature's bounty to ruin; hunting was violence; hunting was love. With such disparate and even incompatible framings defining the primary ways through which hunting as a practice was and is understood, it is to be expected that both an explicit love and explicit hatred for hunting would sometimes find expression in the same written work. A particularly poignant example of such a literary embodiment of hunting's intensely contradictory framings exists in William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*. While I will not be considering this collection of short fiction in its entirety, Faulkner's sequential pieces “The Old People” and “The Bear”—written as they were by an avid hunter during a particularly violent era in human history—present a fascinating and profoundly disturbing shift from a reverent, nearly religious rhetoric towards hunting to what could be called a hate-filled portrayal of its “civilized” manifestations and myriad, often catastrophic consequences. As such, Faulkner's fiction could be considered another expression of the environmental melancholia at work in Akeley's narrative. Yet I argue that *Go Down, Moses* stands more as the inheritor, and exacerbator, of the raging yet impotent despair towards American civilization under capitalism as first expressed in *Moby-Dick*. For amidst the frantic romanticization of hunting as a practice and mournful depiction of its consequences, interwoven throughout the text is the portrayal of hunting as but one of the tools by which rapacious, even “evil” individuals have altered the world through their all-consuming desires. It is in fact here depicted as a process that will, as Faulkner puts it, turn the entire earth into a “worthless...rock” (270).

While the rapid disappearance of species and particular landscapes across the last two centuries is a global phenomenon, *Go Down, Moses* presents a particularly jarring and melancholy shift between love and hatred for hunting. Similar to the paradox first noted in *Moby-Dick*, it also seems to reflect a uniquely American history and ideology on hunting as a practice. It has been proven that the framing of pre-colonial North America as a “hideous and desolate wilderness” devoid of “civilized” human life is a false narrative (Bradford). Yet the colonial understanding and experience of an “uncultivated” North American landmass as “wild” was a powerful and enduring rhetorical tool for European and Euroamerican settlers “as they attempted to justify their aim of claiming the territory for Europeans” (Baym xix). It has even been defined as a vitally important myth for the formation of the “American character” (Baym xix). This framing of the land as “wild,” after all, provided settlers with two benefits at once: a clear material and ideological enemy against which they and their descendants could wage war in the name of civilization, and an “unclaimed” natural bounty, akin to a lost Eden, ripe for the taking. In many European countries, “hunting had long been the sport of [only] the elite, the

great men who ruled countryside and nation”; these men were, after all, the only ones who possessed a privileged access to the few game preserves in heavily developed and largely “game”-less landscapes (Harman 4). In the budding U.S.A., by direct contrast, any man with a gun and the will to do so could go out into the woods and “bag” as many animals as his skill and luck might permit. Any man could, in other words, at least in this regard live like royalty. And indeed, some scholars have argued that the relatively sudden bounty of “game” that greeted European colonists was important for the fostering of a sense of American independence and democratic spirit. The American historian Frederick Jackson Turner even insisted in 1901 that a citizen’s interactions with American wilderness fostered “equality, freedom of opportunity,” and “faith in the common man” (qtd. Radkau 72). The call for an inherited system of intensely hierarchical authority is, this mindset seems to believe, rendered unnecessary and even obscene when one is living in a land that (at least on a certain level) permitted individuals to indulge in the “illusion of unlimited resources” (Radkau xvi).

As summed up by American historian Carlton J.H. Hayes, the belief has long been that “our democracy and social progress and national mores have been chiefly...the creation of frontiersmen, as these in an epic sweep westward across the continent, successively wrested new free lands from the wilderness and the Indians and there, ‘as nowhere else in recorded history, set up institutions relatively free from coercion by either law or habit’” (200). While it was Euroamerican frontiersmen who made this vision a reality, however, their actions and ideals were dependent upon the existence of “new free lands,” “wilderness,” and the original human inhabitants against which they could “heroically” struggle. This “democratic” version of nation-building, fostered by hunting and playing an important role in the creation of a uniquely “American” character, was in other words dependent on what seemed vast, even eternal “fresh” landscapes and their animal populations. As such, it could only last unchallenged as long as its material requirements remained stable. Once previously immeasurable populations of creatures such as the American bison, American beaver, passenger pigeon, and (as hinted with Melville) most species of whale began to crash, concerns about the longevity of the young country’s “character” and chances of sustained existence began to emerge. By the time the 20th rolled in—and while faith in the benefits of industrialism, commercialism, and colonialism remained strong—anxiety over the rapid disappearance of “wild” spaces and the “game” animals they contained started to spike as these locations and their beasts were plowed, shot, mined, and otherwise “developed” out of existence. This anxiety in particular began to go mainstream after the American frontier was officially closed in 1890. The “wild” land and the freedom of movement and life that it came to signify and offer, as it were, was declared over. The “civilizing” of the frontier had long been regarded as a significant feature for fulfilling the tenants of manifest destiny (along with the “permanent subordination or extinction” of the “inferior races incapable of sharing in America’s republican system”) (Horsman 6). Once there was no longer any land to explore and conquer, however, many grew alarmed at the prospect that “the pioneering spirit” that the constant fight against a nature “red in tooth and claw” was believed to nurture was in grave danger of being lost. Such was this crisis that many Americans came to regard civilization—as embodied in urban spaces—as encouraging a corrupting “decadence” that fostered “effeminate” characteristics in men (Raskin 318). As a result, the enterprising, rugged, masculine spirit of the country long adulated as a particularly “American virtue” became even more of an ideal. Numerous works of 20th century literature set out accordingly to praise this “spirit,” with Faulkner providing an exemplary instance of this romanticization in both his human and beast characters.

The perception of nature as timeless—unchanging and as such able to swiftly “heal” back to its “original” state no matter what the budding nation might do to its landscapes—was simultaneously one of the means by which nature was depicted as the opposite if not the enemy of civilized ways of life, yet also as a romantic ideal of the nonhuman world as a place of eternal stability and plenty. Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses* is a novel greatly influenced by this image. The forest of the fictional Mississippi country Yoknapatawpha, first encountered through the eyes of the (initially) child protagonist Isaac “Ike” McCaslin, is frequently described as a space existing “exactly as it must have” when “the first ancestor of [the Chickasaw] predecessors crept into it and looked about him, club, or stone axe or bone arrow drawn and ready” (192). Amerindians, long portrayed as the enemy of the United States who are akin to dangerous “animals” to be swept aside, are here written as an indicator of how little the landscape has changed, and even in such a way to suggest that this staticity was for the best. But this is unsurprising: in addition to *Go Down, Moses* being published in an era witnessing a new appreciation for “the wild,” Faulkner’s South was a time and place “in which the past was considered a better time than the present,” a cultural feature that likely but heightened the appreciation of places, such as forests, that were perceived as “timeless” (Aiken 8). In fact, in *Go Down, Moses* the American wilderness is ennobled beyond other places not only for its status as a space “bigger and older than any recorded document,” but for how, through the hunting practiced within it, a civilization could produce an exemplary type of individual who is “not white nor black nor red but men, hunters” (182). As with Melville’s adulation, the hunter is here framed as an idealized human, one who could, through “the ancient and unremitting contest” of the hunt, develop “the will and hardihood to endure and the humility and skill to survive” (182, 180). This enduring sentiment was also captured in writing by figures such as Theodore Roosevelt, who some fifty year prior wrote that hunting “big game in the wilderness is, above all things, a sport for a vigorous and masterful people” (14). Much of the presumed “nobility” of hunting, as likewise present in *Moby-Dick*, is here as well, but it has been converted into something more uniquely “American” in character. The hunt, as Faulkner describes it, is a primal contest, but it is one in which racial disparities are made to disappear in favor of a near “democratic” tradition by which any man might by his own actions—rather than any inherited characteristic—become the ideal type of American, i.e. the ideal type of human.

Growing up with such an idealized image of wilderness and hunting (with “proper” hunting here depicted as defined not by commerce and colonialism but by “timeless” human-nature interactions and rules one must respect), Ike spends his childhood “trembling” with the desire to join adult men on the hunt (Faulkner 161). And as with any other fraternity, he must first be initiated into its edicts by a mentor, for which Faulkner created a “noble savage” figure “sired on both sides by savage kings” in the form of Sam Fathers (159). Following the trope that because Native Americans and African Americans (of which Sam Fathers is both) are closer to animals than Caucasians they are better at “reading” nature, Sam Fathers is written as the perfect hunting mentor who “taught [Ike] the woods” and “consecrated” him as a hunter (159). Sam Fathers also contributes significantly to weaving an aura of nature’s idealized timelessness through his stories about his own indigenous background and his interactions with animals, including those he hunts. In fact, Sam Fathers “talking about the old days” becomes an act of remembering “those dead and vanished men of another race” (the Amerindians) so powerful that “gradually...those told times would cease to be old times and would become a part of the boy’s present” (162, 157, 162). In the “timeless” space created by hunting and storytelling in the seemingly changeless woods, even dead men continue to live; colonization and all its acts of

violence and genocide seem to shed their consequences. This sense of timelessness—suggested to be a space in which consequential acts of destruction cease to have any lasting impact—is also conjured every time Ike hunts. The singular act of his first successful kill in these woods is even presented as having simultaneously made Ike “a man, a hunter,” as well as marked him as “forever one with the wilderness which had accepted him since Sam said that he had done all right” (166, 169). Even beyond the temporary disappearance of one’s racial and historical—that is, “artificial”—identities through hunting, the socially-drawn barriers between humans and animals are also made porous, and Faulkner describes wild beasts as both semi-mystical and even familial. The first buck Ike kills, a “wild and unafraid” creature which provided the blood brushed against his face that marked him a hunter, is addressed by Sam Fathers, “speaking in that tongue,” as “Oleh, Chief...Grandfather” (175). As an adult, Ike replicates this human-animal intimacy with a snake, whose smell was “evocative of all knowledge” in the same way, its existence compelling him to speak “that old tongue which Sam had spoken that day without premeditation either: ‘Chief,’ he said: ‘Grandfather’” (313, 314). For all that men hunt and kill these creatures, Faulkner’s work contains significant moments of presenting a kinship connection—made all the stronger for being framed in a timeless, almost mythical state—between hunters and the animals around them. It is this kinship he writes as a necessary component for not only becoming a good hunter, but for truly growing up from a boy to a man.

With Sam Fathers guiding him into a recognition of his kinship with the forest and all the creatures he hunts, Ike becomes at age thirteen “as competent in the woods as many grown men with the same experience” (198). Ike’s “long life” is also described as bound to be “dedicated to the wilderness with patience and humility,” and in the narrative this is presented as for the good (189). In fact, the importance of “wilderness” and its creatures in the formation of the ideal human is here at such a high degree that, even more so than his tutelage in the hunt under Sam Fathers (and in direct contrast to the singular hatred leveled at destructive “alpha-predators” such as Moby Dick and the man-eaters of Tsavo) it is not until Ike hunts and confronts the quasi-mystical bear Old Ben that he finishes his transformation into a hunter and a man. Faulkner even writes that if “Sam Fathers had been his mentor and the backyard rabbits and squirrels his kindergarten, then the wilderness the old bear ran was his college and the old male bear itself...was his alma mater” (199). As with Moby Dick—as with many of the menagerie of hunted beasts who are portrayed as more-than-animal—Old Ben carries with him a “long legend...of wreckage and destruction” (218). And as with these other creatures, it is his success at disturbing the works of humans and evading death that earned him not only a name that “a human man could have worn and not been sorry,” but also framed him as the living embodiment of paradoxical perceptions towards nature (218). Here, Old Ben is written, on one hand, as the embodiment of the wilderness that “the little puny humans swarmed and hacked at in a fury of abhorrence and fear” (183). Yet this beast is also a creature considered so worthy of respect—indeed so vital to the local hunters’ sense of their world—that while they undertake an annual trip for the express purpose of taking the bear’s life they “did not even intend to kill” him (184). Ike himself stalks Old Ben carefully and successfully but does not take the shot when he could have. Both he and Sam Fathers agree, however, that the bear *must* die, and must be killed by one of them. As with many hunting narratives before it, *Go Down, Moses* propounds that the “worthiest” animals are only to be slain by the “worthiest” hunters. This is an attitude present in hunting stories from modern works of fiction to mythologies thousands of years old.

Faulkner’s stories are in part defined by admiration for hunters and an idealization of nature and its creatures as a source of ennobling, even potentially redemptive possibilities. As the

narrative progresses, however, the reverent description of hunting's consequences is replaced with a shockingly morose and even hate-filled portrayal. This turning point truly starts with the almost simultaneous deaths of Sam Fathers and Old Ben, which, as both are presented as neither noble nor necessary, stand in stark contrast to the "finale" of many other hunting narratives (as earlier exemplified in *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo*). Faulkner frames these deaths instead as almost pathetic tragedies that but make explicit the destruction and even the absence of the moral values that other parts of the work depict hunting as necessary to foster. But more than this, in *Go Down, Moses* these two deaths are but the first in a rising wave of written violence, horror, and even apocalyptic situations that hunting, as part of a colonialist enterprise, is presented as having deliberately fostered.

Ike spends much of the work firmly believing in the framing of his kind of hunting as timeless, noble, and moral. He even speculates that it is "perhaps only a country-bred" man—one who could and had developed a multiplicity of close relationships with other creatures—who could "comprehend loving the life he spills" (173). And indeed, while the word itself is rarely spoken, the text makes it clear that Ike has great love and admiration for the creatures he hunts and the environments that sustain them both. The ideals instilled in him through this particular type of hunting, however, come to clash ferociously—and indeed end up losing—against the material, catastrophic realities of both his personal family history and the history of the United States as a whole.

In truth, this tension had been present in even the introduction of Sam Fathers, who may have been a respected hunter but who was also overburdened with the historical, cultural, and material consequences of being born into African American and Native American ancestry. His very name, "which in Chickasaw had been Had-Two-Fathers," stands as a continual reminder that he is the progeny of two denigrated peoples who were, for all of their common suffering, not above exploiting the other; being the son of a Chickasaw chief and a "quadroon" (a person who is one-quarter black), Sam's father had "married" his pregnant mother to "one of the slave men which he had just inherited...and two years later sold the man and woman and the child who was his own son to his white neighbor, Carothers McCaslin," Ike's guardian and cousin (158). As overburdened with the consequences of violent history as Sam Fathers' enslaved life and pathetic death were, however, Faulkner reveals how he but exemplifies how the American landscape has already been saturated with a destructive history even to its own ruin. Ike, the great hunter, does show some resistance to accepting the consequences of such a history by refusing to possess the "tamed land which was to have been his heritage" (243). Functioning under the "democratic" spirit hunting instilled in him, Ike argues instead with his cousin McCaslin that the ownership of land is a sin of the highest order. Land, he states, was created by God *not* for man "to hold for himself and his descendants," as one does under a monarchy or aristocracy, but rather to "hold the earth mutual and intact in the communal anonymity of brotherhood" (243, 244). Such is Ike's belief in the necessity, indeed the *destiny* of this communal holding that he even claims God had permitted the genocide of Native Americans because "He saw that only by voiding the land for a time of Ikkemotubbe's blood and substituting for it another blood, could He accomplish His purpose" of a world without owners (245). Yet for all these sentiments, McCaslin—whose voice is utilized to indicate how the "burdens of an ancient past were conveyed from the older generations to the younger ones"—insists that their grandfather *had* tamed the land they resided on, that consequentially he did indeed "own it" (Aiken 119, Faulkner 244). In contrast to uniquely American hunting ideals, he owned the land, but even this owning was nothing to be proud of. It stands instead as but one more line in the "tedious and

shabby chronicle” of European and Euro-American violence- filled history, in which rather than escaping from the violence of their predecessors, Americans had but replicated them to the detriment of all, human and animal alike (Faulkner 244).

At this juncture, Faulkner does not completely eliminate the literary techniques he had utilized to create a sense of timelessness in earlier pages. As Ike and McCaslin argue, however, their voices are made to merge together so that in spite of their initially contradictory sentiments they both seem to be telling the same history, and it is one of destruction and horror. In doing so, Faulkner indicates that his earlier adulation of the world’s timelessness is but an easily shattered fable, instead presenting the histories of both Europe and the United States as defined by irreversible, all-encompassing pain, violence, and catastrophe. As Ike/McCaslin phrase it, not only was “half the known world and all it contained... chattel” for its most vicious despots, but that these same despots had with every generation irrevocably ruined more and more of the land’s wealth—even its ability to sustain life—until Europeans had been left fighting “over the fragments of [the world] until at last even the fragments were exhausted and men snarled over the gnawed bones of the old world’s worthlessness” (244). The land that would become the United States is then defined by Ike/McCaslin as “an accidental egg discovered to” the first Euroamericans by God as part of an effort to have “rescued them” from the Old World; God, as the voice of Ike/McCaslin puts it, had “led them to [the New World] as a sanctuary and refuge” (244). Yet this is a rescue these men of the Old World would refuse. Instead, they but re-created the same dynamics they lived and often suffered under in “The Old World” (for what is colonialism and capitalism but a continuation of serfdom and slavery?) and in so doing turned North American into “the same worthless tide rock looming in the last crimson evening” as their parent country (270). These sentiments may appear surprising given the enthusiasm for a particular kind of American living that many other sections of these stories celebrate. Yet they are far from confined to the realm of fiction: to give but two examples, the United States perpetuated the mass industrialized slaughter of “nearly three million whales of all species” in the twentieth century alone, and far earlier than that even the Founding Father John Taylor found plentiful reason to describe U.S.A. land management as “murder of the soil” (Srinivasan; Taylor qtd. Radkau 177). They were instead the inescapable, material reality of what the processes of “civilization”—as particularly embodied in hunting—had wrought on once fertile landscapes.

It may be that Ike, Sam Fathers, and to an extent McCaslin and other men in *Go Down, Moses* turn to hunting and the wilderness to cultivate “*Courage and honor and pride, and pity and love of justice and liberty*” (Faulkner 283). Yet both their history and current practices are so riddled with continuous violence and permanent destruction of the very land and creatures they say they love that Ike—in a direct and twisted parallel to the sense of timelessness he cultivated with Sam Fathers—“even at almost eighty” would “never be able to distinguish certainly between what he had seen and what had been told to him: a lightless and gutted and empty land where... men armed in sheets and masks rode the silent roads and the bodies of white and black both, victims not so much of hate as of desperation and despair, swung from lonely limbs” (277). So encompassing are these histories of indulged violence and encouraged selfishness that Ike’s refusal of his inheritance is due primarily not to an abstract sense of justice, nor even the knowledge that his family had perpetuated “the general and condoned injustice” of slavery, but particularly because he learned slavery had permitted his own grandfather to commit an unspeakable act of enslavement and incest without consequence (252). Piecing together old family records to discover why a black woman his grandfather had enslaved drowned herself, Ike

comes to realize that his grandfather, having “travelled three hundred miles and better to New Orleans” to buy this slave woman, then raped and impregnated her daughter, who was likely his daughter as well (254). As the final blow, his grandfather had left a “thousand-dollar legacy to the son of [this] unmarried slave-girl” without explanation, indicating, as Ike puts it, that for “that evil and unregenerate old man” this “*was cheaper than saying My son to a nigger... Even if My son wasn't but just two words*” (280, 256). For all the fine sentiments that hunting was believed to cultivate, in other words, *this* is the true face of Ike’s “ravaged patrimony” in “the dark and ravaged fatherland” of the South: land that was more hostile to life with every generation, and family under the control of the most vicious among them (283).

Near the beginning of *Go Down Moses*, hunting is presented as the practice through which the then-child Ike could become an honorable man. At its end—with the destruction of animals, humans, nature, the world as a whole now revealed as Ike’s true inheritance—he takes on the role of a helpless spectator as Sam Fathers and Old Ben, the two beings whose existences were vital to his understanding of hunting and of himself, almost simultaneously meet their deaths. For all that Ike has assumed Sam Fathers would “continue to live... long after the man himself had entered the earth as chiefs and kings entered it,” he instead ends his life paralyzed, helpless, and crying out piteously on the forest dirt after Old Ben is slain by Boon, a man scorned by other hunters and who had never shot anything but would not stop trying (157). In something of an echo to Akeley’s own words on the destruction of African wildlife, Ike also thinks that “there was a fatality” in the hunting deaths of Sam Fathers and Old Ben: “It was the beginning of the end of something, he didn’t know what except that he would not grieve. He would be humble and proud that he had been found worthy to be a part of it too” (214). Yet there is nothing to *be* proud of in this world, for all that a particular kind of hunting masked its most ugly features.

After a large portion of the forest he had spent his youth hunting in was sold to a lumber company and thus condemned to the annihilation of a clear-cut, Ike “went back to the camp one more time before the lumber company moved in and began to cut the timber” (300). Even at this late juncture, Ike thinks that the forest he had spent his youth in “did not change, and, timeless, would not” (307). Yet just how untrue this sentiment is becomes clear through Ike’s surprise at the land between “the four concrete markers set down by the lumber company’s surveyor to establish the four corners of the plot... reserved out of the sale,” which is “lifeless and shockingly alien in that place where dissolution itself was a seething turmoil of ejaculation tumescence conception and birth, and death did not even exist” (311). Ike, reeling from this sight of this “alien” landscape, starts following an equally alien sound, “that steady savage somehow queerly hysterical beating of meta on metal,” and, coming into a clearing/image of the future, finds a tree that at “first glance... seemed to be alive with frantic squirrels. There appeared to be forty or fifty of them leaping and darting from branch to branch until the whole tree had become one green maelstrom of mad leaves [in a] frenzied vortex” (314). Yet for all that it was squirrels that offered but “kindergarten” levels of instruction in Ike’s hunting, Boon is there, guarding them, “hammering furiously at... the barrel of his dismembered gun... with the frantic abandon of a madman. He didn’t even look up to see who it was,” but instead shouts to Ike to “Get out of here! Don’t touch them! Don’t touch a one of them! They’re mine” (315)! In a landscape whose animals, people, wealth, and history have been all but extinguished, the desire to keep killing, even if it is but squirrels, has not disappeared. Instead, it is all that is left. This, then, is hunting’s true nature, laid bare on a now barren land: not the cultivation of men into admirable individuals, but the cultivation and fulfillment of a desire and to keep on killing until not even the most common of beasts, now slated for slaughter, are left.

Section Four: Encouraging Violence and Creating Hell in David Vann's Goat Mountain (2013)

In their documentation of hunting practices among Africa's nonhuman carnivores, the famous naturalist pair of Jane and Hugo van Lawick-Goodall defended the creatures from accusations of "cruelty" by writing that it is *human* history which is "lurid with the so-called inhuman acts of humans" (14). Nothing less than the "infliction of torture" against "men and animals alike," in fact, seems "to be a part of man's heritage" (14). This pair is far from the first to suggest humans carry an inherent, even "biological" propensity for extreme acts of brutality; influential figures such as Sigmund Freud helped popularize the idea that humans as a species are defined by hatred "older than love...[which] always remains in an intimate relation with the self-preservative instincts," with the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries witnessing an explosive growth and acceptance of—and even a demand for—the theory that humans are biologically hardwired to express violent, selfish, "beastly" behaviors (Freud, "Instincts," 139). Hunting itself was defined as a manifestation of these "natural" impulses when in the 1960s researchers from anthropologists to primatologists, "wondering how men in particular had evolved into such ferocious hunter-killers," developed the still powerful "Hunting Hypothesis (also known as Killer Ape theory)" (Vaillant 113). Under this model, it is interpersonal aggression and war that is the primary drive behind human evolution, and hunting in all its violence is "our ancestors' primal drama"; beyond the usual justifications for human violence, in other words, this theory suggests barbarity continues because it is an animal, natural, *inevitable* part of our foundational makeup (Vaillant 112). As noted in previous sections of this chapter, hunting's role in the violence of empire-building and resource extraction had for centuries been predominately framed as a social good, a necessary means by which a nation could advance into a better, more civilized future. As the increasingly catastrophic toll this type of hunting (and the power systems it supports) takes against animals, environments, civilizations, landscapes, even the globe itself becomes ever-more obvious and ever-more inescapable, however, a mass re-defining of both "the hunt" and "the human" seems to be taking place. In this new framework, there is no genuine sense that this kind of hunting is for the benefit of humanity, or even for base necessity. Rather, one hunts because that is what humanity's own violent yet unavoidable "nature" demands.

It is, in light of one war, one human-made catastrophe after another, understandable why a "man-the-killer" theory on human "nature" would become so widespread and even so desirable. And yet, as van Lawick-Goodall also argue, it is "only man who kills with complete awareness of the suffering he may inflict; only man, therefore, who can be *guilty* of deliberate torture" (14, italics mine). And it is here, at this crossroads between a uniquely human guilt and an "animalistic" delight in killing creatures, that I find it appropriate to end this chapter with an analysis of David Vann's *Goat Mountain* (2013). More than many other hunting narratives—fictional or otherwise—this novel spends a significant portion of its page space on visceral descriptions of the violence, viscera, and even glee in the bloodbath of human and animal pain and annihilation that is a firm part of hunting's past and present manifestations. Yet it does Vann's work a great disservice to present it as the hunting narrative equivalent of torture porn. Even with such literally raw imagery, Vann's novel does not frame the definition of man as a violent animal as the recognition of a hard truth. Instead, his work indicates that it is a deliberately fostered "natural" justification for the continuation of long-standing regimes of power which continue to perpetuate themselves "by necessity" even in the face of the ever-

exacerbating excesses, catastrophes, and apocalypses shaping the Anthropocene. For all that even those living in the 21st century still abhor the equation of humans with other animals, *Goat Mountain* suggests, it is an association increasingly relied upon to defend those social, cultural, and even technological forms of living that can no longer be blithely described as the heralds of progress, stability, and civilization. This does, however, mark a bitter irony in Vann's novel. *Goat Mountain*, as with *Moby-Dick*, *Go Down, Moses*, *In Brightest Africa*, and many others, makes explicit the absolute, often deliberate failures of longstanding regimes of power. Yet in a hauntingly similar parallel to the dynamic set down by Melville over a century in the past, the recognition of the disasters hunting as a tool of colonial-capitalism wreaks is accompanied by an inability—perhaps even refusal—to think how one might hunt, might act, otherwise.

In many of its most basic plot points, *Goat Mountain*—given the frequency with which hunting is framed as a tradition through which boys become men—is very standard in its set-up. It follows the story of a young unnamed boy (who is also the narrator, recalling the novel's events as an adult), his father, and his grandfather during a hunting trip in which the boy aspires to make his first kill. Here as well hunting is not only produced as a strictly masculine space (“My mother,” the boy states, “had left before I had memory, my grandmother was dead, and these three men were all I had...were all I knew”) but is an activity by which a valued history and tradition is preserved, at least for those who prove themselves worthy (Vann 58). Indeed, the boy's narration is strongly reminiscent of that given by Faulkner's own boy protagonist Ike when Vann's character describes his family's hunting campsite as simultaneously a space as “close as we'd known to Eden” (i.e., an ideal and mythologized local) as well as “where *our* history was kept...and all would be told again during this hunt, and for the first time my own story would be added if I could find a buck” (that is, a familiar, personalized, and therefore treasured place) (35, 11, italics mine). Yet unlike the lush savannahs and seas of Melville's and Patterson's work, or even the picked over patrimony of Akeley's and Faulkner's, the landscape of *Goat Mountain* is one that hunting has already transformed into an irreparable “ruin” (8). This is a devastation the boy feels keenly. He had grown up with “stories of ducks everywhere on the lake, game everywhere in the woods” (5). In his own lifetime, however, most of the land “held nothing,” leaving him with only anger “even at eleven years old...at my missed inheritance” (5). Mourning the destruction of once lush and fecund “wild” landscapes is not a rarity within more recent hunting narratives. In beginning his novel with the boy's anger over missing his chance to kill a seemingly endless plethora of beasts, however, Vann indicates how twisted, yet how normalized and even naturalized a viciously destructive form of hunting has become. For rather than condemning the kind of hunting that had turned the property he was to inherit into a wasteland, the boy simply assumes that such destructive hunting will keep happening until the annihilation of all animal life is complete.

Looking over his family's land, all while contemplating how there was not “a single living thing” other than “leftovers” (i.e. the smaller creatures) like dove and quail, the boy states that it is his fate to kill these beasts until they too are extinct, and that “after they were gone, I would kill field mice and the little brown birds” (6). Although there are those who argue it is through hunting that humans might find means by which to co-exist with the creatures they kill, here the very notion that hunting does not have to end in the annihilation of entire species and landscapes is never mentioned as even a possibility. Instead, absolute violence for the boy is initially interpreted as both an inevitability as well as a joy. He even describes the act of aiming a gun and pulling the trigger with a living creature in the crosshairs as “a moment of perfection” so “complete and immediate” that a “part of me just wanted to kill, constantly and without end” (12,

49, 12). Although such a sentiment may seem shocking—especially from the mouth of a child—the western world’s hunting literature and material manifestations have often done nothing but encourage it. For at least two hundred years—as exemplified by imperial hunting literature, which often presented “little difference between beast and man—the hunted human was a beast on two legs”—hunting had a significant role in fostering and encouraging violence against beings both human and not (Mangan and McKenzie 123). The unnamed boy could then be read as but another consequence of this mindset when, handed his father’s “.300 magnum” (while they are hunting deer this is a “rifle for shooting bears...some part of him willing destruction”) to look at a poacher through the scope, he pulls the trigger and, watching the poacher fall dead, initially feels as little remorse for this human as he would “when looking at the carcass of a buck” (Vann 14, 23). “If anything,” he recounts, “I was excited” (23).

There is a line of thought in animal rights movements that proposes a direct comparison between the suffering of humans and the suffering of animals will render the former more sympathetic to the latter, resulting in the dissolution of systems and practices that perpetuate animal agony. *Goat Mountain*, however, presents from almost its first pages the exact opposite: a comparison between humans and beasts here only makes both easier to destroy. Even in the face of his shocked and enraged father, the boy doubles down on his comparison between the man he casually murdered and all the deer he’s seen shot, all in a frame that justifies his bloody action; the dead man “smelled just like a dead buck, exactly the same, and the same large flies had come to swarm around the wound” (24). The boy even imagines his family’s praise if it was a buck he had killed with his “excellent shot,” and thinks almost huffily that a mere species change is all that was required for his act of murder to be “considered good” (24). He only becomes upset when his father takes his rifle away, and only because the loss of his weapon had rendered him the “outsider on the hunt that should have been my initiation” (46). Killing an animal is still understood as a requirement to be a man, a member of the group, and even with the poacher’s body lying on the dirt and attracting flies it is this loss of initiation that is felt more keenly. In fact, indulging in the absolute violence that the kind of hunting he had grown up with supports, the boy frequently expresses a contempt for “weakness”—that is, morals—which he sees as damaging the actions and therefore the worth of both his father and his father’s friend Tom, who joined the family on this trip. His father, as the boy characterizes him, is “weakened by a sense of right and wrong,” and given his unwillingness to commit sudden acts of violence he “could make no demands. He determined nothing, and this had always been true” (75, 189). Scorning such “weakness,” the boy also offers a comparison between humans and animals in order to argue that not just hunting but *all* of civilization’s foundational stories in myth serve as a “recognition of the demon...the animal inside us”; that the “beast is what makes the man” is for him a “recognition we [as a species] wanted and needed” (198, 159, 198). In the ruined landscapes of the 21st century, hunting is not categorized as a means by which to foster utopia or lead to the spread of civilization but is instead defended as a material expression of humanity’s bloodthirsty and natural desires. The “moral,” as the boy murderer believes, “are always left helpless in the face of *who we are*” (196, italics mine). Phrased another way, being bloodthirsty and destructive is *the* defining feature of our species-being. Trying to stop or move against this is a fool’s errand.

Hunting, the boy insists, is what he was “born for” (135). It is *only* through the tradition of killing a deer and eating its heart that he would be “made whole,” “able to stand...before my father and grandfather” because their history “was somewhere in all that we had killed” (159, 78). Hunting, no matter how devastating its consequences, no matter the levels of violence it

fosters against humans and nonhumans alike, therefore only makes sense “if killing was natural, something we were meant to do” (86). As with Ishmael, Patterson, Akeley, and Ike, the boy turns to mythology in search of the origins—and therefore the justifications—for his actions, discovering one in the story of the first murderer Cain, who he describes as having “killed his brother” Abel because Abel was “what was available” (29). Human or animal, Cain’s very “nature” is here interpreted as having required him to kill some living creature no matter the species of familial relation, and the boy reads this as true of all humans. In 1996 the primatologist Richard Wrangham lamented what he argued was the fact that “humans are cursed with demonic males,” who are naturally, “given to vicious, lethal aggression” (167). As Vann frames it, in an era where hunting and living as usual can no longer be defined as the means by which to make human life better, the “natural”—and therefore unavoidable—desires of the “demonic male” are precisely what many eagerly point to, may even adulate, in order to justify the continuation of even the most destructive of current systems and traditions.

Goat Mountain is defined from the first as a story of explicit violence, blood, and pain. It features not only a framing of hunting that presents it as but the expression of “the joy and promise of killing,” but also numerous and nearly blasé descriptions of the private atrocities that the vicious power of the gun and an assumption of a permission to kill can permit (Vann 49). From the boy’s act of murder to a brief scene of him tormenting a lizard to his later torturous, pages-long killing of a deer as ordered by his grandfather, *Goat Mountain* presents its readers with a stream of bloodshed and brutality that often leaves one numb from the sheer excess of horror. And yet—and in keeping with the untenable paradoxes that commonly define animal narratives—Vann does not permit his narrator the safety from human morality the demonic male offers. The boy, initially indifferent towards his act of annihilating another human, begins to lose his composure and confidence in his contempt for “weakness” in two simultaneous ways; he is both compelled to recognize how his cultural (i.e. artificial) upbringing had as much to play in his thoughts and actions as any “inherent” (i.e. inevitable) “human nature,” and that for as much as he might wish to claim the title of “animal”—and the permission to wallow in bloodshed that it is now often taken as bestowing—he is a human, able to recognize the consequences of his actions and thus burdened with the guilt that such knowledge brings.

Although first presented as “a thing of flesh with no thought” and “an obesity pumped full of insulin and pills...A thousand generations, tens of thousands of years, ended by him,” Vann depicts the character of the boy’s grandfather as an exemplary demonic male, an embodiment of the unthinking, routinized destruction behind the kind of hunting that is part and parcel to the wholesale obliteration of landscapes, cultures, and species (19, 46). He is, in other words, the boy’s progenitor, his idol, and then his source of potential death. The grandfather possesses not only astonishing speed and strength that he wields with complete power and casual cruelty against the other members of their hunting party, but is also the only human who displays the unthinking, “natural” violence from a human that the boy had initially adulated. He even proves himself ready to slash his grandson’s throat “like the throat of any sacrificial animal,” leading the boy to think that his grandfather “did not come from god,” but rather “from something older, unthinking, unfeeling...And what he offered was annihilation” (61, 63). Yet although he is a “beast himself,” the grandfather also viciously enforces the rules of hunting and civilization in an almost whimsical manner, demanding in one moment that his grandson be killed for having murdered the poacher, and the next forbidding the boy’s father at gunpoint from finishing off a buck that the boy crippled but did not kill because this tortured beast “belongs to your son. He has to kill it” (147). The boy had already considered nature to be a horror show.

Through watching and being a victim to his grandfather's violent actions, he comes to think this even more true of human tradition; "Obligation. What's required of us by God... We sow what we can, but god found Cain's offering inadequate. And nothing more that Cain could do. What if it's not possible to please god? No offering sufficient, but an offering required nonetheless" (149). As the boy reads it, in the same way the buck "was what my family required, and yet it wasn't sufficient. No celebration. But my grandfather made sure it would be my kill," enforcing the rules of the hunt by turning his rifle on his family all while laughing at their moral agony, the "rest of us here for his grim entertainment" (149, 221). The boy's grandfather, in other words, is most terrifying not in that he is capable of indifferently killing his own family, but that he simultaneously demands and makes a mockery of both the rules of the hunt and of society as a whole. For all that *Goat Mountain* offers in parts an indulgence and adulation of the violence of "naturally" vicious "demonic males," it also suggests the horror of social practices and norms. After his first animal kill—which he had to perform with a knife, thus losing the safety of the gun and thus having to *feel* his prey die—the boy "lost the desire to kill" (150). But the history he had grown up with demanded it, his grandfather had threatened him with death if he did not carry it out, and the boy sees his relation between himself and his father and grandfather as but proof that they are but the end of a line of "enforcers generation after generation, slaves on every road," that "the life I inherited was this, and I had no power to change it" (202, 203). Here human action is not so much "natural," but is nevertheless inevitability shaped by direct threats of violence and even death by the members of one's own family. In each case, it is not something that a person can change.

Suspended as he is between what he defines as the "natural" actions of his species and the threatening demands of his family, the boy nevertheless finds that morals and an understanding of consequences is now an undeniable part of his life, no matter how much he may wish otherwise or how much he may have initially denigrated them, or indeed how often he may paradoxically—and hypocritically—swing between the desired amorality and a life of morals. While this swing is seen in the boy's thoughts about the man he had killed, it is especially explicit both in the literary and material sense when the boy finally kills his first buck in what is the most violently graphic and drawn-out hunting scene here considered. When the boy killed the poacher, Vann portrays this with a level of detachment—an allowance of killing a living being with a gun—that because of the sudden death it dealt helped to mask the horrors of death, if not necessarily the horrors of the corpse. The buck, however, dies slowly and painfully and in such a manner that the boy could feel how "in killing, I was taking everything. And what I destroyed could never be remade" (150).

The buck, as the boy describes it, possessed "a beautiful symmetry and power," "large black eyes and a soul" (137). It had been easy to animalize a human so that their violent death did not seem to carry the moral weight that it might have done otherwise, but the boy finds it easy to humanize the animal so that the beast seems more than might otherwise be suggested. Indeed, when the boy shoots the buck's hindquarter, reducing them to "flattened muscle and shattered bone," the buck screams in a voice "human and frightened" (137). It is true that much of what this animal's fear inspires in the boy is entirely in line with his earlier thoughts about hunting, instinct, and domination. He even reports that watching the buck crawl around on its front legs in agony made him viscerally aware of how much power he possessed over other creatures, made as they are "of what I could tear through with my bare hands" (144). The smell of the buck's fear for him was also "something that could make you want to grab his neck in your teeth and just bite through" (143). Yet rather than interpreting his act of violence towards

this deer solely as further proof of the amorality and violence that “inevitably” defines the interactions of humans and beasts alike, the boy comes to reverse this effect of a certain kind of human-animal comparisons so that it becomes a reason to feel a terrible empathy for this suffering beast. He believes that humans “hunt the largest animals because they are the closest to being us” (a shocking if unoriginal sentiment, given the aforementioned long history of comparing hunting to warfare) (141). Yet he also writes that for all that he “felt nothing in killing the poacher...this was different. I could see what the buck felt, the catastrophe, all lost, no hope, the end of a life. I felt that end” (141).

In the midst of his fear and remorse at ruining the buck’s body and then taking its life, and in spite of his eagerness to kill what he could beforehand, the boy comes to state that while killing “was family law and the law of the world... [for him] Every kill would [now] be something forced, something I did not want” (150). His remorse is so strong that it even drives him to reimagine the story of Cain and Abel: Cain, he begins, had been raging against his brother because his offering was “found wanting by God,” and so “without any thought at all he steps behind Abel and smashes that stone against his brother’s skull. That part is easy” (139). But this retelling of the Bible’s first murder grants the same remorse to Cain that the boy ends up feeling for the deer, because after the first catastrophic blow, “Abel/[the buck] is still alive...Abel’s mouth opens in pain, eyes closed and blood in his hair from where the stone has crushed bone and torn flesh...And Cain is standing there with the stone in his hand” (139). Cain’s/the boy’s rage “is gone. Flimsiest of emotion, a cover and never itself, a betrayal. Cain feels tricked. But it’s too late now to go back. And so he has to kneel down over his brother and see his brother’s face as he brings the stone down again, and this time Cain is shielded by nothing, this time he knows who he is” (139). For both the boy and Cain, in other words, remorse and an understanding of consequence is a firm part of their nature. And yet in some capacity the excuse for even horrifically violent actions is still there because “part of us will never wake up. Part of us will act according to instinct, and that will never change. And one of our first instincts is to kill” (140). This is a major component, at least for the boy, of the horror inherent in *Goat Mountain*; that the development of a uniquely human mind meant all “that was instinctual” was “suddenly bearing consequence, our animal nature betrayed by consciousness” (140). In this way, Vann condones and condemns both the image of humans as bloodthirsty beasts as well as the image of humans as rational creatures, yet he presents no other model for how one might behave outside of this deadly paradox, instead writing it as humanity’s inevitable fate to turn lush landscapes and even family dynamics into unrelenting versions of hell.

After he has made his first animal kill and successfully eaten portions of both the heart and liver of the buck—thus making himself a man according to family tradition even while he, a murderer, is now forever an outsider—the men of the hunting party drive off and leave the boy in the dark to try and take his “trophy” back to their campsite alone. Left in the empty, ravaged landscape with only an animal’s corpse for company, the boy comes to think that he is already in hell, a material plane left empty by generations of violent men upholding destructive traditions. We do not, the boy states, “know what makes life,” and having “dismantled” living creatures, “reduced [them] to blood and bone and flesh gone dead,” pieces that can be put “back together forever and never make a thought,” it is “perhaps...our task in hell, to try and build what we had taken for granted” (171). While walking back to his family’s camp in the dark, the head of an animal he had killed perched atop his own, the boy finds himself wishing that he could *become* a buck and in so doing shed “the curse of humanity”; given the other option, it is here framed as preferable to live as an animal with “No doubts, no indecision, only instinct” (165).

Goat Mountain, as with the hunting narratives before it, is a work of its era. The explicit awareness of ecological devastation, deep sympathy with animal suffering, and even inter-familial abuse are all topics that have marked literature to the point of becoming obsessions in the 21st century. Yet Vann's novel is notable not just because of these subjects but because of a devastating self-awareness made all the more awful by its hypocrisy, and Vann, through the words of his unnamed boy, appears completely aware of this. Even a hatred and bitterness towards the violence of one's own ancestors, one's own civilization, and one's own violent actions cannot, it would seem, drive one to act differently than the catastrophic models set into motion generations before one was born. And yet a recognition of deadly and permanent consequence is ever present. The dream of the demonic male, Vann's work suggests, lies ultimately not in being able to use one's own "animal nature" as a justification for one's violent, destructive behavior, but rather in the comfort of imagining, if only for a few scattered moments, that—for all the disgust still shown to comparisons between humans and other creatures—one is akin to the beasts who live only in the moment, never having to regret the actions of the past or fear what the future may hold. Being aware of the consequences for one's actions in the 21st century is in this way the ultimate hell. Recorded history has already laid out clearly what atrocities our daily behaviors and beliefs will cause. Within such a world, every day even the excuse of ignorance becomes more and more a lie. It is all too understandable that the boy, a child murderer only set to inherit a ruin "fated" to become even more of a wasteland under his ownership, would express a desire to live in the era of cavemen; "if we can go far enough back," he notes wistfully, "we cannot be held accountable" (59).

Chapter 2: Fecund Dystopia

*Section One: “The Breaking Down of Men”: Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* (1906) and the Mass Rendering of Humans and Beasts*

On August 7, 2019, United States media outlets were abuzz with the news that US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) had performed the “largest immigration raid in a single state” (Primera). This federal organization had sent “more than 600 agents” to numerous Mississippian poultry plants—which as a totality kill and clean “853 million broilers per year”—in a mass onslaught that ended with 680 plant workers suspected of being undocumented immigrants being “apprehended and taken away on buses” (Jordan, Kidd et al., Jordan). While company officials of the targeted plants—Koch and Peco Foods—“face no charges” for having hired “illegal” people, they were left scrambling to hire new and presumably “appropriate” workers to fill the slaughterhouse jobs that were coercively emptied (Zhu et al.). Koch Foods reportedly began organizing a job fair on “the day of the raids” itself (Zhu et al.). Although factory farms and industrial slaughterhouses are notorious for high labor turnover rates—at some plants it “can exceed 100 percent in a year”—interviews with American-born individuals hoping for work suggested that these plants will have little trouble finding new bodies of the human variety to fill required slaughterhouse roles (United States Government Accountability Office). As one such individual put it, “I feel bad for the little kids [who were left alone after the raids that imprisoned their parents]... You know, their mom and dad’s out of a job, you know, but I’ve been out of a job too” (Elliott). The machinery of industrial slaughter for these plants was soon started again to full capacity, and chicken flesh continues unabated to be a cheap part of the American diet. As sweeping as these raids were, in other words, they had so “little effect” on America’s “wider food processing industry”—well known to be, despite the denials of many company heads, “a dangerous business that is heavily reliant on immigrant labor”—that none of its components had changed (Horsley). Industrial slaughterhouses frequently attract outrage over the status and treatment of human workers, to say nothing of the mass deaths and suffering of the slaughtered beasts themselves. Yet as the Koch and Peco raids put on full display, even an expansive and expensive interruption by federal forces changed virtually nothing for either “food animals” or their ground-floor killers. Instead, both forms of life were successfully re-sequestered into spaces apart from public sight, public oversight, and therefore—necessary though their existence and labor is to maintain a meat-heavy lifestyle—out of public, legal, and to an extent even literary concern.

In the previous chapter, I scrutinized the necessity of encountering and writing about a particular kind of animal in a particular kind of way in order to maintain a specific perception on hunting and its consequences. Yet the hunting narratives I covered had been works that, written during the ascent and eventual domination of global capitalism and its myriad catastrophes, had begun to struggle with a very different framework for what animals—and the humans who interacted with them—were or could be. Understandings of nature as an endless Eden/larder could not survive unscathed the widespread material disappearance of actual beasts, and in the face of the world’s increasingly empty landscapes many writers found themselves torn between a love of hunting and a hatred of its ever-more apocalyptic consequences. The animal literature examined in this chapter differs in many ways from those of hunting narratives. Stories drawing on the material realities of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs, i.e., factory farms)

and industrial slaughterhouses, however, can be understood as the logical successors to the environments hunting as a tool of colonial-capitalism created. For after the emptying of landscapes that hunting narratives both reflect and helped make real, this “free space” was soon filled with an over-abundance of animal lives, but primarily those controlled by capitalist enterprises. Hunting stories offer often intimately violent competitions between a highly individualized human and a highly individualized animal, with the “trophy” of the chase (i.e. pieces of the successfully-hunted beast) acting as an important component in validating these narratives. The narratives considered here, by direct contrast, are defined by quantities of artificially nurtured animals lives so vast in number that the true extent of their swarms can barely be imagined, let alone believed. These numbers are also far from the realm of fiction; by a recent count, there is now at least “four ‘food’ animals raised for every person on the planet”; in the United States alone “45 million turkeys are killed [only] for Thanksgiving. Six billion broiler chickens are raised in sheds. A hog sticker in a highly industrialized factory...[can] cut as many as 1,100 throats per hour” (Imhoff xiii; Introduction 1). Yet despite this unprecedented number of animals being birthed, raised, and killed every day of every year—and despite the fact “that almost all areas of human life are [especially now] at some point or other involved in or directly dependent on the killing of animals”—the average citizen encounters little recognizable evidence of all these creatures, either alive or dead (Introduction 3). Those that do—as with the Koch and Peco Foods employees, many of whom found themselves sequestered from the rest of society first in poultry plants and then in ICE’s private prisons—are often made almost as invisible as the creatures they kill and render into anonymous meat. Many contemporary interactions with other creatures, and the literature that examines these interactions, is thus the polar opposite of those defining hunting narratives. Far from announcing an intent to kill a specific beast and bring back “trophy” as evidence of the deed, this “purposeful killing of animals” happens on a routinized scale involving millions of deliberately anonymous beasts, and the rendering of the resultant corpses—and the human individuals whose labor creates these corpses—is purposefully performed in such a way that the humans and animals involved are made “largely invisible in the public domain” (Introduction 3).

One of the conceits of this chapter on literature inspired by the mechanisms of CAFO and industrial slaughterhouse systems—hereafter referred to as works in the Fecund Dystopia genre—is that for all that these narratives originate in very different decades over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries, they are almost stagnant in their presentations of animal and human suffering in tales of the systematic object-ification of creaturely flesh. The frameworks through which the subject of this section—Upton Sinclair’s “muckraking” novel *The Jungle*—have been read are wildly diverse; it has been seen as providing “an excellent case study of the remaking of the American working class during the early twentieth century”; as showcasing corrupting economic forces to engage with the naturalist movement’s aim of revealing “the real ‘savagery’ hidden under the garbs of civilization”; and as an (in)famous point of contention as to how much fact and fiction may have been deliberately muddled as Sinclair “loaded the dice to convince readers that packinghouse workers led heart-breaking lives in a capitalist jungle” (Barrett 4; Von Cannon 43; Øverland 2). I will add that in addition to these frameworks, Sinclair’s 1900s slaughterhouse novel can be taken as testament to how little the factory farm system has changed over its more than a century-long existence. Indeed, one overarching sentiment of *The Jungle*—which can be considered one of the first and most influential works in the Fecund Dystopia genre—was perhaps best captured by the 21st century scholar Cary Wolfe. In his theorization on definitions of animality, Wolfe argued that far from being confined to nonhuman species, “the

animal” is a term commonly wielded to render humans, both figuratively and frequently literally, into “something anonymous, either through massification...or by being reduced to an equally anonymous condition of ‘bare life’” (5). For all the insistence otherwise, status as a member of species *Homo sapiens* is not sufficient to save one from the “legitimate” violence, exploitation, and death often portrayed as the inherent lot of nonhuman beasts. There is, of course, essential criticisms to be made over many too-free parallels drawn between human and nonhuman creatures; Donna Haraway has noted that assumptions about the “human-like” characteristics of animals has often resulted in much suffering for humans and beasts alike, and the attribution of animal-like characteristics to humans has been a foundation for many acts of bias, oppression, and even genocide. Yet it is through his continual comparisons between the life of the Lithuanian immigrant Jurgis Rudkus and a common slaughterhouse pig that Sinclair illustrates how living beings of all species and sorts, within the very bosom of industrialized “progress,” are deliberately rendered—both literally and figuratively—through the same systems of power, as with Melville’s whales, into “machines for the creating of wealth for others” (Sinclair 288). Man or pig, human or animal, creaturely life is being designated as a kind of perpetual motion machine that produces its own easily exploitable flesh.

In the previous chapter, it was argued that hunting as a tool of colonial-capitalism became a practice primarily dedicated to the emptying of landscapes of their indigenous wildlife and indigenous populations. The collapse or even outright extinction of certain animal and human populations was but the first half of this endeavor. The primary purpose of colonialism is, after all, to recreate both the social and ecological makeup of the colonizing country in the colonized landscape, no matter how ill-suited or explicitly destructive it might ultimately be. The initial clearing-out of a landscape’s wildlife—and the products derived from their corpses—provided an initial boost to promote the desired economic and social systems. The factory farm—which in these colonized spaces came to replace “nature” as a seemingly endless and eternal source of material wealth and was early on presented as a necessary, beneficial, and technologically advanced boon to humankind—would be what “filled” these deliberately emptied spaces; indeed, “most stockyards were initially located on prairie land” (Cronon 209). It is likely in awareness of how the factory farm (in this novel represented primarily by the fictional complex of a packing plant and slaughterhouse Durham’s Meat, although placed within this historical setting of Chicago’s Packingtown, which contained feedlots, slaughterhouses, and housing for the workers) presented itself—as well as in acknowledgement of the vast stores of material goods and wealth that slaughterhouses generated—that Sinclair writes of the Rudkus family and their friends as being astonished into an almost religious wonder at the workings of the “great packing machine” (85). They are awe-struck upon hearing that this enterprise stands as “the greatest aggregation of labor and capital ever gathered in one place,” how the cattle pens are a “sea” that stretch “as far as the eye can reach,” and how “some eight or ten million live creatures [are here] turned into food every year” (34, 26, 27). Under such a presentation, Durham’s does seem an eternal cornucopia, able to replicate through the ingenuity and labor of humans not only the bounty of nature, but a bounty firmly under human management and control. Yet in the midst of the Rudkuses’ awe and admiration of these animal numbers, human beings are seamlessly folded into the raw mathematics of biopower in the input/output logic of the slaughterhouse which is most completely materialized in the “de-assembly” lines that make up slaughterhouse work. This too is initially presented as good, with the numbers to back such a claim up: besides employing “thirty thousand men,” Durham’s is also cited as supporting “directly two hundred and fifty thousand people in its neighborhood, and indirectly it supported half a million...and it furnished

the food for no less than thirty million people” (34). It is not only that human and animal capital is being concentrated in one particular spot, but that the concentration of this capital is presented as beneficial, providing the very basis for life itself to an immense population who might otherwise starve. For all that later literature often (and understandably) draws on the factory farm as inspiration for its more dystopic imaginings, one could forgive Jurgis in his early tour of the slaughterhouse for feeling “a sense of pride” that he would become “a sharer in all this activity, *a cog in this marvelous machine*” (27, italics mine).

The language of mechanization—particularly during an era in which industrialization was argued to be the United States’ best way forward—came by the early 1900s to possess an aura of efficiency and control. In fact, the technologies of the industrial slaughterhouse and packinghouse soon offered an image of how man might not just sever his ties to nature, but completely overcome them: the “most basic technical innovation” of making and selling meat on a country-wide scale, after all, “had been to devise new means for protecting meat, especially beef, from its own perishability. To separate an animal’s death from the decay that ordinarily followed hard upon it [the packers] had harvested the winter’s cold and suspended the wheel of the seasons” (Cronon 248). Yet the question of *who* benefits from this technologized overcoming of “nature’s limits” is one that, as Sinclair understood and went out of his way to present in *The Jungle*, not ultimately a question of species, but a question of class. Within the “tropical heat and the sickening stench of fresh blood” that define even the most mechanized spaces of the industrial slaughterhouse (and this is by no means the worst of it), the mass of human and animal bodies—and their accompanying effluvia—required for the functioning of the factory farm are ultimately not separated according to species but according to the type of labor they can perform in service of this overarching machine (Sinclair 225). For the nonhumans, their role is to live long enough to be shipped out and killed within the industrial space, and subsequently to be rendered into a variety of foodstuffs and other products from soap to buttons. For the humans on the killing floor, it is to work at a breakneck speed to manufacture an every-growing number of said products, and to suffer and die somewhere unseen when they inevitably become “the worn-out parts of the great merciless packing machine” (103). It is with Sinclair’s desire to present what raw and literally visceral consequences the framing of living beings as “cogs” leads to that *The Jungle* replaces the abstract numbers of capital for bloodily explicit descriptions of the “breaking down” of bodies, with both “food” animals and working people being rendered into goods and waste.

While goods and waste are usually understood and experienced as two very different entities, *The Jungle*, in particular through its presentation of human and animal diseases, frames this dichotomy as not only false but as a mindset that masks the extent to which contagion is accounted for and incorporated into the mechanics of mass production. A contemporary audience, terrorized as it is has become through the traumas of zoonotic pandemics such as BSE, bird flu, swine flu, and most recently COVID-19, may understand the factory farm to be a potential source of disease. Yet Sinclair—contradicting more contemporary theories on zoonotic diseases concentrating in and originating from slaughterhouses as a sign of unruly nature re-asserting itself even within as tightly-controlled a space as the factory farm—presents Packingtown as a veritable petri dish of infections that brings great suffering to *some* humans and animals alike who have their suffering, contagion, and death manipulated into serving the drive to mass production that underlines the factory farm.

The animals are a clear aspect of this, and Sinclair spends numerous pages on their various maladies—and how these maladies do not stymie the push for faster and faster

production—so that even a contemporary reader can understand how the nausea this book inspired would be strong enough to eventually result in the formation of the FDA. As but one example of the stomach-churning examples of slaughterhouse “tricks of the trade” that Sinclair presents, one slaughterhouse boss is described as purposefully purchasing cattle so “old and crippled and diseased” that they “would have been worthwhile for a Dante or a Zola” for cheap; he did so safe in the knowledge that the state of these beasts would not matter because his business “killed meat for canning only” (80). The presence of disease and filth is explicitly everywhere, from these sickly cattle intended for consumption to those smaller and more uncontrollable “harbingers of disease” rats (which the offal-coated slaughterhouse attracted in droves), and which also come to be included in the manufacture of edible goods (Burt, “Conflicts Around Slaughter,” 10):

a man could run his hand over...piles of meat and sweep off handfuls of the dried dung of rats. These rats were nuisances, and the packers would put poisoned bread out for them; they would die, and the rats, bread, and meat would go into the hoppers together...the meat would be shoveled into carts, and the man who did the shoveling would not trouble to lift out a rat even when he saw one—there were things that went into the sausage in comparison with which a poisoned rat was a tidbit (Sinclair 112).

The “old Packingtown jest” stated that the business would “use everything of the pig except the squeal” (111). This sort of manufacturing and recycling, besides bits of the meatier parts of animal corpses, included (and indeed still includes) the multitude of infections, sores, and effluvia that the “food” animals in all their unbearable masses would be made to suffer. *The Jungle*—as the fiction significantly responsible for sparking mass outrage over the “shockingly unhygienic conditions in the Chicago stockyards” that would eventually be addressed in the passage of the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act and the later creation of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)—stands as one of history’s more influential novels (U.S. Food and Drug Administration). Yet Sinclair was deeply unsatisfied with his novel’s results. As the man himself infamously stated, “I aimed at the public’s heart, and by accident I hit in the stomach” (v).

Sinclair’s frustration is understandable, for what many readers (and global capitalist systems as a whole) appear to have ignored—or more likely refused to acknowledge—was how the contagion rampant among “food” animals and the infectious agents present in the products made from their flesh also made for a life of misery among those employed in rendering these virus-riddled bodies into every product possible. Indeed, for all that descriptions of diseased “food” animals, unsanitary working conditions, and virus-riddled edibles pushed onto an unaware public have captured audience minds (and guts) for generations, *The Jungle* appears to have been far more interested in making explicit how completely human beings are subsumed into the logic and mechanisms of the industrial slaughterhouse not as its workers—which implies a more symbiotic relationship—but as raw resources, just like the animals they were paid to kill. In contrast to many other human-animal comparisons (and likely in defiance of the eugenic theorization growing in strength during this era, in particular around the “urban poor”), Sinclair used such comparisons as a cudgel not to argue that certain subsets of humanity were “inherently” bestial, but rather than the slaughterhouse of a society that they lived in pushed them to both act like beasts and to suffer the same fate as any other animal. In this, Sinclair’s decision to present his study on Chicago’s Packingtown not through a journal article but through a work of fiction that follows the fate of an immigrant working class family in chronological order serves to drive Sinclair’s message home. Bit by bit, his readers learn not just of what horrors are common in Packingtown through what would otherwise be framed as the personal,

even “natural” failings of specific individuals, but also of how easily a human being—even one who is strong, a hard worker, and in the prime of his life, as ideologies of social Darwinism might suggest would “naturally” succeed—might be rendered, tragedy by tragedy, illness by illness, and even piece by piece, as thoroughly into material goods and waste as the animals he was hired to kill.

It is, as with the sorts of “natural” (i.e. nonhuman) disasters that industrialization had early on promised to save humanity from, the old and the young who die easily and first. Jurgis’s ailing father Antanas, who as with almost every other man had had to go “begging for a chance to earn his bread...with no more place in the world than a sick dog,” is the first to really start falling apart (49). Sinclair documents every major step of the process; after the chemicals Antanas worked in as a mopper for offal intended for canned meat in Durham’s “pickle rooms” had eaten through his boots, “sores began to break out on his feet, and grow worse and worse...it was a regular thing...the sores would never heal—in the end his toes would drop off if he did not quit” (64). He becomes “a mere skeleton. There came a time when there was so little flesh on him that the bones began to poke through...And one night he had a choking fit, and a little river of blood came out of his mouth...and then at last one morning they found him stiff and cold” (65). This is the portrait of the lingering death of an old man, but, as Sinclair had noted, all of this was rendered normal, was indeed accounted for and encouraged in the workings of Packingtown. For just as mass after mass of “food” animals were being brought to the factory farm every day, the same was true of human workers. Durham, in fact:

had sent his agents into every city and village in Europe to spread the tale of the chances of work and high wages at the stockyards. The people had come in hordes; and old Durham had squeezed them tighter and tighter, speeding them up and grinding them to pieces, and sending for new ones. The Poles, who had come by tens of thousands had been driven to the wall by the Lithuanians, and now the Lithuanians were giving way to the Slovaks...They were like rats in a trap, that was the truth; and more of them were piling in every day (56).

Because the number of laborers are so many, extreme and ever-expanding specialization in the rendering of beasts is permitted. And while Jurgis had “marveled while he listened to the tale of all the things that were made out of the carcasses of animals,” he discovers—first through his dying father and then through his own experience in the “fertilizer” rooms (in which animal bones are ground up) that “each one of these lesser industries was a separate little inferno” in which the “workers in each of them had their own peculiar diseases” (81). In this way, humans become not workers, not even raw labor, but rather, as with their animal counterparts, *surplus*—that which is left over when all needs have been met, that which might thus be cultivated or culled depending on what the logics of the market demand. This is never clearer than when Sinclair describes how, even while immigrant workers are brought to Packingtown in ever-growing masses, during the winter these same humans—beset by pneumonia, grippe, tuberculosis, and bitter cold in addition to poor diets, poorer living conditions, and specific maladies from blood poisoning to missing appendages— “died off in hordes. All the year round they had been serving as cogs in the great packing machine; and now was the time for the renovating of it, and the replacing of damaged parts” (65). It is not simply that this artificial landscape is challenging, but that starvation, exhaustion, and disease are encouraged to the point where it is literally uninhabitable, its population only maintained because more fresh bodies are continually pumped in.

As grim a picture as Sinclair has painted with this, the physical labor of vulnerable adult humans is not the only kind of “capital” that Durnhams is able to squeeze from Packingtown’s human population. Industrial slaughterhouses, after all, depend as much upon the “production” of living creatures as much as they do upon the deaths of the adult(ish) ones. In an eerily similar way—and in following what Silvia Federici argued was a society-wide, violent, and ongoing push to construct “the family as the locus for the production of labor-power”—*The Jungle* presents Packingtown as a landscape in which not only are its poverty-stricken adult workers being treated as raw resources, but that this is doubly true for their many children (95). Early on in the novel, Sinclair hints that there is something about Packingtown’s makeup, as with that of the “food” animals, that may be artificially inflating the number of kids within this already cramped and disease-riddled space: “innumerable children played...The most uncanny thing about this neighborhood was the number of the children...there were so many children to the block in Packingtown that nowhere on its streets could a horse and buggy move faster than a walk” (23). There is schooling for the few families that can afford it (or afford it while they can), but a dearth of decent wages and even a sense of resentment that the environment of Packingtown helps breed in adults against their children means that very few get any. Furthermore, it is children and not adults who are the preferred laborers, for the constant introduction of new machinery to replace the physical labor of older humans ensured that “the packers could get as much work out of a child as they had been able to get out of a man, and for a third of the pay” (57). Within the poverty of Packingtown the choice between an education and work becomes a false one, as sure enough the Rudkus family have to take one child after another out of school because “there was no reason why their family should starve when tens of thousands of children no older were earning their own livings” (101). Those children not employed in the slaughterhouse or its myriad offshoots spend their days playing in “stinking green water,” rolling around “in the mud of the streets,” and digging around for half-eaten food for both chicken feed and personal consumption, as the very land they lived on “had been ‘made’ by using it as a dumping ground for city garbage” (24). As with their parents, the sheer number of Packingtown’s pack of half-wild children ensures it is both possible, permissible, and even justified in the minds of their own parents that they should be shoved into the role of yet more (and particularly useful!) cogs, each one as disposable as the adults and the animals. In this way, Packingtown’s adults are made beasts of burden twice over, first through their raw labor in killing and rendering animals, and again for their transformation into “production units” themselves, each family birthing and therefore supplying cheaper and cheaper labor. Packingtown’s midwives “grow as thick as fleas,” and these swarms of humans are accompanied by swarms of flies so thick they “blackened the air” (86, 24). The immigrant labor brought to Packingtown, as with the animals shipped in by similar means, are in this way made to be cheap labor that reproduces itself without end.

The “beastialization” of both humanity and animality in *The Jungle* is thus framed as a process that lasts from birth to death. Yet Sinclair does not present this material situation as a reason to believe in the inevitability or even naturalness of this “jungle.” Near the beginning of *The Jungle*, in fact, the reader is exposed to a description of profound animal suffering in the mechanized and routinized death of the slaughterhouse hogs, and how while it was:

porkmaking by machinery, porkmaking by applied mathematics...yet somehow the most matter-of-fact person could not help thinking of the hogs; they were so innocent, they came so very trustingly; and they were so very human in their protests...They had done

nothing to deserve it...It was like some horrible crime committed in a dungeon, all unseen and unheeded, buried out of sight and of memory (29).

Here was to be found, in the one piece of the animals that the slaughterhouse could not sell, “the hog squeal of the universe,” the expression of how each “one of these hogs was a separate creature” with “an individuality of his own, a will of his own, a hope and a heart’s desire” (29). Even as it routinely annihilates animal minds and bodies, in other words, the slaughterhouse cannot be defined as an enterprise working with only “raw material”; the “personhood” of even the pigs all speak to the monstrousness of its designs.

Yet just as the mechanisms of the slaughterhouse renders each beast into “simply no existence at all” outside of the products derived from its corpse—and in doing so indicates how completely a living, feeling being might be literally objectified—Sinclair presents animal comparisons as more and more apt for his human characters as they become ever more desperate, made to live ever more like a “wild beast” (30, 128). Jurgis, who at the beginning of the novel prides himself for his physical prowess and sneers at the “*Silpnas*, puny fellows” who he was sure would be the only ones experiencing “the breaking down of men,” becomes, after “working in the steaming pit of hell” that was the fertilizer room, “like a wounded animal in the forest” and “a dumb beast of burden, knowing only the moment in which he was” (17, 114, 189, 117). He is far from the only one who undergoes such bestialization: his young wife Ona, her “accursed work...killing her by inches” and knowing she will die with the birth of their second child, develops “the eye of a hunted animal”; a woman working in the sausage room performs a job that sees her “racing with death,” and to add insult to injury “well-dressed ladies and gentlemen [come] to stare at her, as at some wild beast in a menagerie”; the company itself, the larger system of capitalist enterprise it represents are “ravenous vultures [who had] marked them for its prey” (116, 117, 111, 148). The industrial slaughterhouse and the city it supports and is supported by might contain “stores of heaped-up wealth,” but “human creatures [are] hunted down and destroyed by the wild-beast powers of nature, just as truly as ever they were in the days of the cave men”; the result of all the progress and comfort the industrial slaughterhouse claimed to provide, in other words, was but a means by which to force vast populations of humans into the status of beasts (97).

Not even human infants are spared from these infernal, infectious designs; before he later meets his end “drowned out in the street,” Jurgis’ young son Antanas had been left to suffer from many of the diseases Packingtown had to offer with no doctor and no care (175). As all adults and even young children in his family had to work to not starve, he had been left “a plaster of pimples and sweat, a great purple lump of misery” on his cot, “whimpering and wailing his torment” (115). Next to the demands of the slaughterhouse, in other words, an infant’s agony is not something worth bothering with. Even the death of the young boy Stanislovas, whose corpse had been found after “the rats had killed and eaten him nearly all up,” does not halt in the slightest this great machine (243). While Sinclair remarks that it “was to be counted as a wonder” that, between the rushed pace, sharp knives, and accumulation of human error “there were not more men slaughtered than cattle” in the day-to-day workings of the slaughterhouse, *The Jungle* argues the difference of these deaths is one of time more than anything else (67). The animals were sent in to die immediately. The humans were to die piece by piece.

A cow or a pig might be designated as a “food” animal at Durham’s, but we witness in *The Jungle* how the same economic enterprise by design creates its own class of “waste” humans: “every day the police net would drag hundreds of [vagrants] off the streets, and in the detention hospital you might see them, herded together in a miniature inferno, with hideous,

beastly faces, bloated and leprous with diseases...barking like dogs, gibbering like apes” (192). The final consequence of the factory farm is then not progress, or a beneficial society, or any of the stated ideals of this era. It is instead, as Jurgis so poignantly represents, to reduce men to suffering and miserable bodies, stumbling about “like a wounded animal,” having “lost in the fierce battle of greed, and so was doomed to be exterminated” (189, 193). Rather than balking at a human-animal comparison, the central point of *The Jungle* is made explicit from Jurgis beginning the story muttering with relief ““Dieve—but I’m glad I’m not a hog,”” to fully comprehending, having lost everything to the meat plant, “that a hog was just what he had been—one of the packer’s hogs. What they wanted from a hog was all the profits that could be got out of him; and that was what they wanted from the workingman” (20, 264). Just as what “the hog thought of it, and what he suffered, were not considered,” so “it was literally the fact that in the methods of the packers a hundred human lives did not balance a penny of profit” (264). Human-animal comparisons are frequently used to denigrate and present certain humans as those who can be—indeed even *must* be—subjected to a ““non-criminal putting to death”” (Wolfe 9). *The Jungle*, however, finds the comparison apt not because of the animal-like character of humans, or the human-like character of animals, but because both beast and man are made victim to “the spirit of Capitalism...a monster devouring with a thousand mouths” (Sinclair 27). For both pigs and men, the system that perceives and transforms every kind of life it can into a source of profit, as first noted in *Moby-Dick*, has in *The Jungle* been portrayed as not just the means by which humans are made “animal,” but by which both beasts and humans are turned into things.

Section Two: “There’s Nothing Sacred About Cells and Tissue”: Human Flesh and Animal Capital in Margaret Atwood’s Oryx and Crake (2004) and Don LePan’s Animals (2010)

In her seminal work on the figure of the human child within post-apocalyptic narratives, English professor Rebekah Sheldon argued that in serving as an “assurance of human vitality,” the child is made to embody “figurative and literal value” (20). While “value” is a word loaded with multiple possible meanings, cultures of commodification—even, and commonly especially, within social/environmental systems reeling under the blows of multiple catastrophes—frequently manipulate “value” into definitions that support the transformation of most of humanity into a “biologically vulnerable, biologically exploitable resource” (21). Sheldon’s disquieting thesis was first published in 2016. When considered in context with the historically accurate abuses of human children, adults, and nonhuman animals Sinclair depicted in his 1906 novel, however, the exploitative framing of the child/the human Sheldon makes explicit is shown to not be a contemporary phenomenon. Instead, it stands as a 21st century articulation what has become an unchanging, unending, if ever accelerating, process of rendering vulnerable animals and “animal-like” humans into raw capital. My interest and analysis of the two exemplary post-apocalyptic, fecund dystopic novels *Oryx and Crake* (2004) and *Animals* (2010) will therefore focus less on the unique plots of these literary works and more on their shared—one is even tempted to say static—imaginings of forewarned catastrophe. In both works, global warming has wrought and continues to wreck devastation; mass extinction has irrevocably occurred and humanity is far worse off for it; and human populations have “naturally” (with continuous direct and indirect coercion) grown to colossal and—as these narratives present it—perverse numbers. To an even greater degree than *The Jungle*, both novels imagine a future in which the family unit

itself is blatantly a site of material production, with human children existing primarily as swarms and herds whose members may be killed, sold, and otherwise exploited with impunity. This is a tragic state of affairs, as both novels explicitly remind their readers. Yet in their presentations of how easily “the social” and “the natural” are made porous in the service of hypercapitalism—including their shared displays of overwhelming existential problems and an impossibility of holding any one person accountable—they bear a resemblance to *Moby-Dick*’s conundrum. Indeed, it could be argued that both but join the ever-growing host of apocalyptic narratives in displaying the extent to which even imaginings of a better (or even less atrocious) futures have, quite literally, been rendered impossible. It could even be argued that *Oryx and Crake* and *Animals*, for all that they wholeheartedly condemn the factory farm system and its adjacent regimes of power, continually teeter between these two desires. Explicit calls to the “natural” are heavily criticized. The frequency of their use in both texts, as well as the inability of both authors to do away with them completely, however, indicates both how effective they are in the material world and perhaps how much even those critical of using “nature” as a justification for artificial systems may nevertheless desire such naturalization to be true.

Written lamentations of environmental catastrophe and the ever-expanding annihilation of wild animals is common across both more recent hunting narratives and—as chapter three will further explore—works dedicated to conservation. Those narratives falling under the Fecund Dystopia genre, however, are often notable from other portrayals of ecological woe in one important way: in their acknowledgement that the historic, systematic processes that drove and continue to drive entire ecosystems of species, peoples, places, and possibilities into oblivion, they present this as less of an unfortunate accidental consequence of colonial-capitalism, and instead as an increasingly deliberate (if never explicitly spoken) endeavor to “encourage” only those landscapes and creatures best suited to support regimes of capitalist accumulation. Indeed, the hyper-commercialized worlds of *Animals* and *Oryx and Crake* are notable not just for their portrayal of a planet Earth that has undergone human-driven ecological demise and mass extinction, but for how completely this extinction has been framed as normal, inevitable, and even “natural” while systems of commodification chug on. This is a dynamic at clear work in the political and economic structure of *Oryx and Crake* (besides being the earlier work, in many ways *Animals* is but a version of that novel in which the powerful bioengineer Crake’s viral “final solution” to a destructive “human nature” was never carried out). Atwood has both her point-of-view character Jimmy/Snowman—who was made immune to Crake’s genocidal virus for the purpose of ushering Crake’s genetically modified “children” into a human-less world—and Crake himself initially regard the social/environmental/viral catastrophes of their world in an almost blasé manner. They inhabit an Earth in which the familiar features of the planet have been thoroughly annihilated but a generation ago, from the “vast tundra bubb[ing] with methane” to “the Asian steppes turn[ing] to sand dunes” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 24). Wild animals followed their habitats into oblivion, existing in the novel’s world only as part of the popular online memory game Extinctathon, in which players are awarded points for typing in the correct nomenclature of the vast menagerie of species that “had kakked out within the past fifty years...[from] Pollution, habitat destruction, credulous morons who though that eating its horn would give them a boner” (80). It is a grim—and ever-more likely—scenario, a fictional culmination of the real and current trends driving everything from the 2020 Australian and Californian “mega fires” to the rise of ““eco-anxiety,”” a widespread and growing ““chronic fear of environmental doom”” (Mulkern; Fawbert). Yet Jimmy/Snowman, separated from a once-stable world by but a generation and listening to his mother mourn the environments she watched

burn out of existence (“her grandfather’s Florida grapefruit orchard...dried up like a giant raisin...and the Everglades had burned for three weeks straight”), categorizes this as just her “snivel[ing]” (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 63). He even goes on to state that “everyone’s parents moaned on about stuff like that” (63). For Jimmy/Snowman and his peers, environmental catastrophe and environmental melancholia, when not something to mock, is just the way things are. And indeed, the predictability and commonality of even landscape-wide eco-catastrophes is here not only frequent enough to be summed up in an almost boring list (“more plagues, more famines, more floods...more droughts”), but normalized enough to make Jimmy/Snowman—having spent his entire life watching it endlessly play out on a screen—wonder why “everything [was] so much like itself (253, 254).”

Almost this exact scenario plays out in the world of *Animals* as well, although here animal annihilation was primarily due to antibiotic-resistant “superbugs” that originated within CAFOs, and which culminated in what the novel calls “the great extinctions” (LePan 30). In this way, LePan brings to fiction the concerns numerous real virologists have expressed over whether “pigs, cows, chickens or turkeys raised with antibiotics really could bring on the apocalypse” (Moyer). Yet while encounters with these “superbugs” was indeed apocalyptic for the vast majority of creaturely life in *Animals*—every being from the great apes to “the meat animals and the meat birds and almost all the fish species that humans had consumed” were annihilated because of them—it was not, ultimately, disastrous enough to even slightly change capitalist systems of power or the CAFO enterprise whose practices created the catastrophe. Instead, as LePan writes, while there was initially “a great deal of hand-wringing...and widespread recognition that maybe, just maybe, our own behavior had something to do with it,” it is not long before the passing of generations frames extinct creatures as little more than the relics of a different era (48). They become little more than some-*thing* that had been “part of [your] parents’ world,” and nothing more (78). Nicole Shukin has argued that constant comparisons between the “efficiency” of machines of the industrial era and “primitive” organic life has embedded the latter with a sense of “imminent ‘pastness,’” as if most living creatures were always already condemned to extinction in the face of human technological achievements (124). In *Animals*, this sentiment reaches its most apocalyptically normalized conclusion both in the annihilation of most forms of animal life and in the rapidity with which the designation of “food animal” soon re-establishes itself through the insertion of biologically, but not legally, human flesh into the CAFO enterprise. In both *Oryx and Crake* and *Animals*, in other words, a world mostly devoid of nonhuman animal life has seamlessly and easily become the new normal because animals are framed not as animals but as “containers for capital” (Sheldon 128). Under this definition of the term “animal,” certain sects of humans easily take the place of nonhuman beasts.

In keeping with the cascade of socio-environmental catastrophic trends that have defined the contemporary era, Atwood and LePan do not rest their imagined futures upon only the beastly catastrophe of a completed mass animal extinction. In addition—and in writing choices that reflect how the continual disappearance of “wild” creatures is followed by the coerced overgrowth of those that lend themselves best to commodification—they present the capitalistic social systems of their scenarios as having easily replaced extinct nonhuman animals with members of species *Homo sapiens*. In a fictional literalization of Cary Wolfe’s statement that “we are all...potentially animals before the law,” these novels present humans as serving every “animal” role from cheap entertainment to lab rats to sources of industrialized meat (105). In fact, for all that—in following one of the major underlying characteristics of dystopian fiction—life on Earth in *Oryx and Crake* and *Animals* is ever-more precarious, the poverty-stricken,

disease and violence ravaged, and continually traumatized human population never shrinks, instead growing exponentially at what both works present as a perverse rate. As a result, humans are often not presented as humans, but instead, as in *The Jungle*, are pushed by their desperation and anger into “animalistic” behavior; uncaring of the future, unaware of the past, knowing only their own hunger, thirst, and lust. While Atwood’s Crake locates the reason for the increasingly lethal trends of his society within a quirk of human nature itself (as he tells Jimmy, “*Homo sapiens*...[is] one of the few species that doesn’t limit reproduction in the face of dwindling resources...the less we eat, the more we fuck”), both works are nevertheless full of implications that population expansion is less due to an inevitable part of human species-being and more due to an overarching social and capitalistic demands to “supply” cheap and plentiful bodies (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 120).

In *Oryx and Crake*, even after mass extinction had wiped out most kinds of creatures, there is still plenty of enough “waste” animals to allow for entertainment programs such as “the Queek Geek Show, which has contests featuring the eating of live animals and birds...with prizes of hard-to-come-by-foods” (85). “[A]nimal snuff sites” also abound, which Jimmy/Snowman regards as initially exciting before finding them so routinely boring that “one stomped frog, one cat being torn apart by hand [appeared] much like another” (82). Animal suffering—here commodified into a cheap and easily accessible spectacle (a status that as even a cursory dive onto the material internet proves is more than fiction)—is not confined to nonhuman creatures. Jimmy, Crake, and a minority of other humans in this ravaged globe live within heavily fortified and company-controlled “safe” spaces called Compounds. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the book early on gives a hint that there is more intensive form of human production and sale with a reference to the wealthy keeping “a for-harvest child or two stashed away in some illegal baby orchard” (23). Most, however, have been left to inhabit “the pleeblands,” polluted and pandemic-stricken cities, which, as they are full of “kids [that] ran in packs, in hordes,” that “swarmed the place,” often serve in the narrative as a kind of “free-range” human production facilities (27, 73). Indicative of a mass of overly abundant and therefore “cost-effective” human bodies as this reference to swarms (and animal adjacent status as the reference to them as “packs”) is, it is completely logical under capitalist systems that human beings would be commodified into spectacles just as much as their unfortunate beastly counterparts. From the beginning of the novel to the end of its organized human civilization, websites such as “hedsoff.com” and “deathrowlive.com” give viewers a constant stream of commercialized human death and violence—ranging from “adulterers and lipstick-wearers being stoned to death by howling crowds” to “electrocutions and lethal injections” (83). Jimmy and Crake also find a plentiful amount of pornography sites such as “HottTotts, a global sex-trotting site,” which are reportedly filmed in regions where life is “cheap and kids were plentiful,” and where therefore people could “buy anything”—or anyone—“you wanted” (89, 90). Watching one stream of child rape the site offers, Jimmy notices that the moans and giggles the audio feeds its audience must have been spliced in after filming because the girls “looked frightened, and one of them was crying” (90). Still, he cannot care, feeling that the little girls were but “digital clones” (90). Atwood even writes that Jimmy, flipping his screen between porn and live executions, ultimately feels that both acts have been framed in such a way as to be all but indistinguishable, and that both are nothing more than entertainment: “the body parts moving around on the screen in slow motion, an underwater ballet of flesh and blood under stress...close ups of clenched eyes and clenched teeth, spurts of this or that...it all came to look like the same event” (86). Through this mix of an ever-growing number of desperate humans and cheap, commodified access to excesses

of human pain, *Oryx and Crake* presents a 21st-century version of the dynamic Sinclair illustrated between the “well-dressed ladies and gentlemen who came to stare at [a woman laboring in making sausage], as at some wild beast in a menagerie” and the woman herself who, with “a family to keep alive” and suffering under “ruthless economic laws [that] had arranged it so that she would only do this,” spends “hour after hour, day after day, year after year, twisting sausage links and racing with death” (Sinclair 111). His social and economic status ensuring him a place among the consumers rather than the consumed, Jimmy may spend his days gawking at, and abstractifying, the commodified misery of others.

Over a hundred years ago, Sinclair had suggested that it would take no particularly significant change to the factory farm system to immerse certain human lives completely into the “animal” part of its processes. While this has not literally happened in the material world (although CAFO ground workers are deliberately enmeshed into a wide range of exacerbating abuses), it is a scenario that has found fertile soil in post-apocalyptic literature, reaching perhaps its most obscene levels of the logical extreme in *Animals*. In this work, it is not simply that most of humanity has been condemned to the precarity of a poverty-stricken life, but that certain segments of even this population have been classified not as “human” but as “mongrel”—who are legally designated as animals—and below even that “chattel,” those “animals” who may be eaten. Here again is a scenario in which the annihilation of nonhuman animal life is followed by the explosion of an exploitable—and in this case even permissibly edible—human population. *Animals* does differ from *Oryx and Crake* in one major way in how this situation is “achieved,” however, for here the exploitable cheapness of human life is not maintained through an ongoing spectacle but rather by means of carefully framing the lives of mentally disabled humans as that of animals (it is soon taken as a point in fact that “something not fully human [could] emerge from a human womb”) and by carefully concealing the industries by which these “animals” are “processed” into meat that is “cheap and bland and softly palatable” (LePan 28, 128). The new management of those humans designated as “mongrels” or “chattel” (a good portion of LePan’s work is dedicated to showing how easily a life may be “transformed” by a change in definition) thus acts as a literary example of Shukin’s thesis on how completely the workings of the CAFO and industrial slaughterhouse enable “public culture in ‘*knowing what not to know*’ about the ‘anonymous flesh’ on their dinner table”; the “rendering industry,” through concealing the creature disassembly required for the procurement of flesh, “has striven to spirit away all sensible traces of the historical—that is, dying—animal” (Shukin 63).

A goodly portion of the horror that *Animals* and *Oryx and Crake* strive to inspire in their readers depends as much upon portraying how common, i.e., how “normal” scenes and systems of atrocity and exploitation are as much as on the explicit descriptions of these things themselves. It is a narrative choice that effectively captures—and to an extent imitates—much of the rhetoric and justifications that surround contemporary CAFOs. LePan’s description of how fertility technologies permitted “rendering” companies to “produce chattel from chattel and accomplish relatively quickly and efficiently... Shorter lifecycles and harvest times... through the wonder of genetic engineering,” for example, bears a striking and likely deliberate resemblance to the broiler chicken company Cobb-Vantress’s explanation of how “DNA profiling using genetic markers and computer programs to optimize selection of pedigree stock” was essential in helping them create a chicken with “excellent growth rate” and the “best broiler uniformity for processing” (LePan 68; Cobb-Vantress, “Research & Development”; Cobb-Vantress, “Cobb500TM”). Indeed, repetition of the themes and scenarios exemplified in *Animals* and *Oryx and Crake*—and which often define an ever-expanding herd of literature both within and without

the post-apocalyptic and dystopic genres—suggests that the fear, revulsion, and anxiety these texts work to inspire is so effective, indeed so popular, precisely because it is so easy to imagine their scenarios being made material. Turning again to *Animals*, LePan even captures how regimes of power create a deliberate blurring between individual human choices and underlying socio-economic trends as justifications to maintain themselves. LePan’s first narrator Broderick Clark, a “*chattel-rights advocate*,” describes how the “great extinctions” were accompanied by worsening economic conditions and an ever-increasing level of inequality between the wealthy and the working class (LePan 131). Indeed, in the book’s timeframe the poor aren’t simply living from paycheck to paycheck, but “mostly just don’t go to doctors, haven’t done so for generations now” (23). This is also a population suffering under what appears to be a form of environmental classism. In a fictional version of the kinds of birth defects that resulted from mercury poisoning in the infamous “Minamata disease” case in Japan, and those due to exposure to the herbicide “Agent Orange” in both Vietnam and the United States, the scientific community of *Animals* comes to understand that the presence of “certain airborne particulates [that] had become steadily more widespread through the twenty-first century, especially following the spread of silicon technology...mapped almost precisely onto the line that tracked the increase in the birth of mongrels over the same period” (Hernon; Absher; LePan 52). It is initially acknowledged that “something was going horribly wrong,” and there is the unspoken implication that it is the most vulnerable who are suffering the worst (52). Yet rather than take any steps to mitigate the source of these rising birth defects—or even to provide any kind of support for those affected—government and corporate systems effectively argue that “it was merely practical and not in any way cruel to look at the big picture, to see the surplus mongrels” as the new and improved “food” animals (52). These powers, in fact, conclude that the best and only response to this disaster was “to harvest a proportion of the mongrel population” for the enjoyment of “real” humans (54). From there, it was not much of an extreme step to legally “define mongrels as animals, not as humans,” and in “a six-three vote the court decided that a mongrel was a non-human animal” (57). As Cary Wolfe succinctly wrote, it “hardly needs pointing out that the practices of modern biopolitics have forged themselves in the common subjection and management of both human and animal bodies” (45). For all the understandable horror and even outright anger that accompanies observations on how closely the exploitative systems managing human and animal lives mirror each other, this particular human-animal comparison routinely proves itself a useful framework. Even in spaces devoid of nonhuman animal life, the figure of animality lurks behind the enforced laws, legal definitions of the different forms of life, and indeed justifications for even genocidal violence. In the midst of maintaining themselves through heavily industrialized/technologized means, regimes of power continually call on an animal framework to legitimize and even “naturalize” their processes.

The literary genres of *Hunting* and *Fecund Dystopia* present radically different interactions between humans and animals. The histories of both, however, indicate a growing desire—and developing contradiction—to simultaneously hold specific individuals responsible for environmental and social catastrophes as well as to maintain a sense of the “natural” (which is usually interpreted as the inevitable) in explaining how rapacious and destructive systems are supported. In *Oryx and Crake*, the titular Oryx is a woman who—originating from a nameless village more akin to a human “free-range” production facility where “everyone was poor and there were many children,” and sold into sexual slavery as a child by her mother as she was—knew from a young age what it meant to be a commodity (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 115). Yet she never shows any outward signs (besides “amused contempt”) of being angry at how she was

treated, or as thinking that what happened to her was anything but the status quo, indeed but part of “human nature” (119). Even confronted with a video still of herself as a little girl in a scene of child rape that Jimmy had taken and kept for years, she merely tells him that it is possible the girl in the photo is her, as there were a “lot of girls [who] did these things. Very many” (91). In fact, declaring Crake a “very smart man” for having “found the problems”—that, in Crake’s words, human misery was *always* the result of instinctually “destructive features” of our very species being, driven as we are by “monkey brains”—Oryx states that there are “too many people and that makes the people bad. I know this from my own life” (322, 305, 99, 322). As such, Oryx becomes a willing participant in the fruition of Crake’s well-funded plan to “solve” humanity’s woes through a two-part scheme that takes as its core assumption that, if the world is to be saved, humans can no longer be allowed to practice reproductive, or even genetic autonomy. In a means similar to that at work in the wild/domestic animal replacement, Crake and his sponsors have decided to first drastically shrink the human population by means of a sterilization pill disguised as the ultimate aphrodisiac. The next step is to alter humanity itself by means of genetic modification. Designed under the assumption that they would be the “floor models” for a commodifiable kind of human, the human-ish beings “the Crakers” which Crake designed are presented as individuals in which “the ancient primate brain” had been altered to do away with its “destructive features, the features responsible for the world’s current illnesses” (115, 302, 305). Oryx, in other words, is not even perturbed by the fulfillment of this most invasive attempt to commodify humans, but rather spends most of the novel genuinely believing that the only means by which to make the world a better place is not to end systems of commodification, but to bring all of humanity even further into overarching processes of making live/ “letting” die. This would, after all, usher in a new era in which the satanic monkey of human nature had finally been done away with and therefore presumably “solved” all human-based ills forever. Left to their own devices, humans are simply “naturally” destructive.

Animals presents numerous parallels to this sentiment, most particularly in the character Carrie. Faced with a daughter, Naomi, who thinks her parents should stop serving “chattel” meat, Carrie gently tells her that meat-eating, even if it is the flesh of the biologically human, is “natural...you’re a lovely child and that’s a lovely thought, but you can’t ask people to do what doesn’t come naturally to them” (LePan 70). It is an idea that even drives Carrie to feel intense revulsion to the bond formed between Naomi and her “pet mongrel” Sam—who was only a little deaf boy—and to break it by putting Sam into the process that would convert him into commodified “hunks” of flesh (147). Driving him to his death, Carrie tells Sam that she knows “it’s not your fault, none of it is. But it isn’t about you, not really...it [his more-than-pet/master bond with Naomi] isn’t natural” (110). At the end of their respective novels, *Oryx*, Carrie, indeed a multitude of characters end up regretting what they put into motion after it is far too late to do anything effective about it. All throughout both novels, a similar strain of regret is expressed: “one person can’t...I’m sorry”; “the mothers who had sold their children felt empty and sad...yet...they’d had no choice”; “I didn’t do it on purpose...it was out of my control! What could I have done?; “how could they have done anything to stop it” (141; Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 121, 45; LePan 153)? There is protest. There is a sense that something different, perhaps, could have been done that would have resulted in a less catastrophic outcome. Yet what the factory farm regime increasingly insists, and what both these works and other seem incapable of untangling themselves from, is the chilling belief that even industrialized abuses are simply another expression of how “nature was allowed to take its course” (26).

*Section Three: “Numbers that Numb the Mind”: J.M. Coetzee’s *The Lives of Animals* (1999), *Hidden Flesh*, and the Private Sector*

“Nature,” as the previously discussed texts demonstrate, does not possess a fixed character. It instead is a concept that is frequently molded to suit specific biopolitical roles, with the factory farm now standing as a prime example of this dynamic. Having taken on as its central subject the discomfort (and blatant unwillingness) with which many regard (or do their best to ignore) this literally beastly state of affairs, J.M. Coetzee’s novelistic series of essays *The Lives of Animals* acts as an exemplary piece of literature for the means by which it highlights the interlocking regimes of theory that keep particular kinds of creaturely life simultaneously on the periphery of everyday life as well as within the very bosom of the household. On its most explicit level, this fiction draws constant attention to the strange present-absence of animals in both our food and in our theory through the portions of the text styled after academic lectures. The more fictionalized elements, however, give notice to not only the raw emotions that even more “objective” discussions on animals constantly arouse, but also to how a focus on animals often only end up masking—or even bolstering—regimes of theory and material systems by which certain humans are rendered as invisible and even disposable as the beasts it is often their job to kill. In its basic plot, it is the story of a celebrated but aging novelist, Elizabeth Costello, who is invited as a guest lecturer to the fictional Appleton College. In this role, she foregoes speaking about her acclaimed narrations in favor of what her son John—the point of view character—calls “a hobby horse of hers, animals” (Coetzee 16). More specifically, she speaks at length, and to an audience who does not particularly want her “death talk,” about the “horrors” animals across the globe undergo while being rendered into our food, our proxies in medical experiments, our entertainment, and indeed the subject-objects we chew on in our theory (19). As with the creatures in hunting narratives, even “food” animals are often assumed to offer a “pure” reading of that which is “natural” and therefore inevitable, making them a point of contention in a wide variety of fields. Costello makes no friends in the course of her lectures, partially because of the uneasy guilt brought about by her chosen subject (John notes that it is a sure “conversation-stopper” when his mother expresses surprise that a meat-eater is not disgusted when they “chew hacked flesh and swallow the juices of death-wounds”) and partially through the anger her speeches stir for both her reliance on the often-used conflation between marginalized human groups and animals as well as the assumption that vegetarianism is commonly wielded by its practitioners as a means by which to elevate themselves into a “superior caste” above the rest of their fellow humans (38, 42). Costello discusses animals and the atrocities against them from both a literal, literary, historical, and theoretical perspective, bringing up in the course of doing so a menagerie of creatures, from Nagel’s bats to factory-processed chickens. Yet outside of the creatures referred to in the characters’ words, the closest we get to a *material* animal’s presence in this narrative is red snapper on a plate (one of the two options at Costello’s celebratory dinner, perhaps allowed because as a fish it is an “ambiguous” creature whose death is perceived as bearing less moral weight than a mammal) and in the leather that Costello’s handbag and shoes are made of (just one more instance of the “Degrees of obscenity” thrust upon animals, as Costello frames it) (38, 44). In all the theory, arguments, anger, and unease surrounding the makeup of their lives, in other words, *The Lives of Animals* seems through this loud absence to be asking: where are the animals themselves?

Animals, as media professor Akira Lippit has argued, now “exist in a state of *perpetual vanishing*,” even to the point where it has become a “cliché of modernity”—a situation also on full display in numerous hunting narrations—that “human advancement always coincides with a recession of nature and its figures—wildlife, wilderness, human nature, and so forth” (*Electric Animal* 1). This is a vanishing made all the more paradoxically terrible, as *The Lives of Animals* presents it, by a simultaneous abundance—even oversaturation—of “animal life” in literary and philosophical works, and dead animal flesh on the table, provided (as Costello phrases it) by a tightly-controlled “enterprise [of animal creation, pain, and death] without end, self-regenerating, bringing rabbits, rats, poultry, livestock ceaselessly into the world for the purpose of killing them” (Coetzee 21). It is within the mechanisms of this enterprise that even such vast quantities of animal life can disappear, being put through a technological process of literal objectification that renders our fellow creatures into the raw material of the meat industry. Yet it is one of the shocks of this work that in utilizing the format of fiction, Coetzee was also able to indicate that even if animals are increasingly absent from our lives—even if, as John tells his mother, we “treat animals badly because we despise them”—conversation around them still has the power to arouse, even in those who may be unrepentant meat-eaters, very intense emotions (58). In particular, even an academic discussion on the man-made troubles defining the current lives of animals is met with “acrimony, hostility, [and] bitterness” partially due to an ongoing desire to deny the more “human” traits of the animals we eat, but significantly due to explicit comparisons made between “food” animals and the humans who, through the atrocities committed against them, find themselves placed at the intersection between the “truly” human and the “purely” beast (67).

While somewhat based in the trope that mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law are all but fated to never get along, it is John’s wife Norma who not only expresses the most explicit anger against Costello, but who brings up a number of points against what she sees as Costello’s hypocritical attempt to make a “Second Ark,” humans need not apply (68). Costello’s attention to the suffering of animals, as Norma perceives it, is not actually about wanting to make a better world for the beasts. For all the moral gesturing, she instead insists it is ““nothing but food-faddism, and food-faddism is always an exercise in power...She’s trying to extend her inhibiting power over the whole community”” (67)! In Norma’s eyes, even conversations that are ostensibly only about animals are never free from their human consequences, and the power-play that warrants the most concern is not that which humans may wield against animals (of which the factory farm is a particularly egregious example), but rather how humans may wield the presentation of moral concern against each other, using guilt to compel others to change their behaviors in ways they would not otherwise. This is also far from the only time that Costello’s arguments in defense of the beasts earns her human ire for “strictly” human reasons. When Costello makes the well-trodden comparison between the workings of the factory farm and the atrocities of the Holocaust—a familiar comparison to anyone who has had even a passing glance at animal rights literature—Norma could ““feel hackles rising all around me in the audience”” (49).

In a protest against such comparisons that Costello makes—and in a part of this story that marks another significant absence—a Jewish poet named Abraham Stern refuses to attend Costello’s celebratory dinner, accusing her of committing “a trick I will not accept”; as he tells her by letter, he could not break bread with her because she had taken over “for your own purposes the familiar comparison between the murdered Jews of Europe and slaughtered cattle,” an inversion that he states “insults the memory of the dead” as well as “trades on the horrors of

the camps in a cheap way” (49, 50). If the comparison is a familiar one, Stern’s anger is also understandable. Anthropologist Bruno Latour has argued that there is no clear line that “separates exact knowledge and the exercise of power,” and the Nazi regime is a particularly infamous, atrocity-filled example of the veracity of his words (3). Their constant, “scientifically-proven” comparison of Jewish people to animals—particularly “swarms” of creatures—and violent obsession with “blood purity” were two of the driving frameworks in making the horrors of the Holocaust a reality. There is real danger, in other words, that in implying that the “‘Jews died like cattle, therefore cattle die like Jews,’” one is not making cattle figures of sympathy, and instead are continuing the perpetuation of the language of animalization that contributed significantly to the mechanized, state-sponsored deaths of untold millions of Jewish people (Coetzee 49). Even so, Costello does not, or cannot, let go of this comparison. In doing so, she insists it is apt to compare the “‘numbers that numb the mind’” of human deaths from the Holocaust to those of the “‘production facilities’” in which billions of animals are “‘produced’” and “‘rendered’” into a now wide variety of commodities, both meat and otherwise (19). In private to her son, Costello tells him that we do not treat animals “‘like objects’” as much as like “‘prisoners of war’” (58). Coetzee even ends this novel by having Costello imagine a scenario—an example of a fiction in a fiction, even if based in real history and industrial systems—that many would find as insulting as it is horrifying. Her interactions with humans that use products made of animals, Costello tells John, is “‘as if I were to visit friends, and to make some polite remark about the lamp in their living room, and they were to say, ‘Yes, it’s nice, isn’t it? Polish-Jewish skin it’s made of, we find that’s best, the skins of young Polish-Jewish virgins.’ And then I go to the bathroom and the soap-wrapper says, ‘Treblinka—100% human stearate’” (69). So tightly linked is the mechanized slaughter of humans and the mechanized slaughter of animals in Costello’s mind that one can easily come to stand in for the other, even if such a framing does offer itself to the dehumanization of already dehumanized minority groups.

There can be little doubt that the comparison of certain human populations to animals—particularly those that exist in “swarms,” their sheer number in a concentrated area of land blotting out most indicators of individuality—is almost always an act of violence, so much so that the organization Genocide Watch has listed the equation of a human group with “disgusting animal names” to be a significant step in the lead-up to state-sponsored genocide (Stanton). Nor can there be any doubt—as Coetzee through Costello argues—that the mechanized slaughter that defines the lives and deaths of billions of animals possesses more than a passing resemblance to what the Nazis deliberately created to “solve” the “Jewish question”; the historical link between the automaker industry, the industrial slaughterhouse, and the mechanical workings of Treblinka, Auschwitz, and the multitude of other camps is now beyond question. Yet within the all-too-understandable hostility, insults, and significant absences—and perhaps particularly within John’s clinging to the future promise that the end of his mother’s time at Appleton will mean things can “‘return to normal’” (that is, he will not have to think about these unbearable questions and material conditions)—Coetzee hints at the elephant in the room that neither Costello, Stern, nor any other character explicitly acknowledges; that even while animals—through the “‘distinction between human and animal’”—unwittingly provide “‘for the law the ‘foundation’ for its exclusions [from the law’s protection] that the law cannot provide for itself,” so are vast swaths of both animal *and* human populations continually and deliberately rendered by overarching systems and structures of power that create and maintain (among other regimes of biological existence) the factory farm, the private prison, and the ever-more militarized environment into an abstractified, amorphous mass of life that is permitted to be little more than

vulnerable, exploitable flesh (Coetzee 68; Wolfe 9). Animal life, as Nicole Shukin succinctly put it, “gets culturally and carnally rendered as capital at specific historical junctures,” our own moment being a particularly extreme example (11). It is not, however, simply an accident, but is rather a feature of this rendering that even biological status as a human does not guarantee safety from, in the oft-quoted words of Derrida, the same “non-criminal putting to death” and exploitation as the creatures on our plates (qtd. Shukin 11). As the increasingly lethal vulnerabilities that factory farm workers are coerced into living within make clear, the rendering of humans into cheap and exploitable flesh is not an inevitable tragedy of the contemporary world, but rather a feature of its design.

In 2018, according to the World Economic Forum, among other edible creatures “almost 70 billion chickens, 1.5 billion pigs and more than 300 million cattle were slaughtered to serve our love of meat.” The concealment of their living conditions, the mammoth mass of their numbers, and the technologies of animal disassembly has assured that these beasts do not exist as “individual creatures...but [as] aggregates of meat more profitably and easily rendered at butchering” (Raber 84). As for the humans whose job it is to disassemble these creatures, in the United States poultry workers are reportedly “twice as likely to suffer serious injuries and six times as likely to contract a workplace illness as other private sector employees,” a situation that was but exacerbated by COVID-19 (Horsley). The “cramped conditions, minimal technical development and highly exploited labor,” in fact, ensures that only “nursing homes and prisons have rivalled slaughterhouses for rampant contagion” (Vettese and Blanchette). “Berkowitz, who was chief of staff at OSHA during the Obama administration,” further stated that “those numbers are likely understated” because the industry “is totally dependent on finding workers who will not raise issues and who, to a degree, live in fear of the company and they’ll just keep their head down and do the work...For the last 30 years that’s been immigrant labor” (Horsley). And indeed, it has become a common reoccurrence—as noted by Ted Genoways, whose 2014 book, *The Chain*, focuses on the food processing industry—that “No one ever seems to ask how it is that a company comes to employ a factory full of people who do not have legal immigration status” (qtd. Horsley). It is not that humans are *exactly* like animals, or that even our “food” animals are *exactly* like us. Rather, what the factory farm is part and parcel of is an enterprise of material power in which both literally objectified animals and violently marginalized humans are molded into inputs, outputs, and finally waste. Far from being able to separate their lives as distinct entities, “food” animals and slaughterhouse workers have long been “locked in a *danse macabre*, together physically degenerating to produce ever more marginal profit” (Vettese and Blanchette). For all that the language of inevitability continually creeps into conversations of the creation and maintenance of the factory farm, for all that they are normalized, made invisible, and even have the very mention of their existence punished, these are forms of power that all exist by deliberate, and therefore avoidable, design.

Section Four: Timothy Pachirat’s Every Twelve Seconds (2013): The Rendering Redefinition of “Animal”

Over the course of the last two centuries, the narratives I’ve here grouped under the Fecund Dystopia genre have drawn explicit parallels between human and animal suffering as a rhetorical means by which to articulate how the wholesale violence and death capitalist systems demand spare no living creature. The “violence of institutionalized killing [against animals],” as

Pachirat states in the last work this chapter considers, “also cuts against humans” (ix). Pachirat’s autobiographical account of his time laboring on a “kill floor,” however, is notable for its significant and troubling differences from the other examined texts. In both writing style and narrative structure, Pachirat often eschews the usual linear story framework (and shock-and-horror tone) in favor of an excruciatingly detailed and technical description of the rendering work of one industrial slaughterhouse. From the actual frantic paced killing of living cattle to the bored exhaustion of hanging a staggering number of their livers on a conveyor belt, Pachirat’s work presents the specialized, isolating, and overtaxing steps by which commercialized killing creates distance both physical and moral between marginalized humans, exploited animals, and those in positions of power. This is a distance, as Pachirat describes it, that works to “coerce” a vast swath of vulnerable life forms “into performing dangerous, demeaning, and violent tasks from which we directly benefit” (9). I argue, however, that this “politics of sight” (to use Pachirat’s phrase) has an even more serious and insidious consequence (255). In her work on nature and power, philosopher Elizabeth Grosz asserts that in contrast to far-reaching beliefs about the “inert, passive, unchanging element” of “the natural,” nature and all its creatures are “dynamic and active” (47, 52). In presenting how thoroughly and commonly animals and their bodies are “disassembled” into commodified objects—and that this process is realized through the labor of humans who themselves are continually rendered into a kind of easily-exploited, easily-replaced, monotonized “beast of burden”—Pachirat unveils how an industrial slaughterhouse works to overwhelmingly transform the rhetorical and material definition of life itself into something that suits only capitalism’s impulses. Humans and animals are here not “human” or “animal” by traditional definitions of the terms. They exist instead as animal-*things*, even while still alive. *Every Twelve Seconds*, in other words, displays nothing less than the logical conclusion of Fecund Dystopia: the success with which corporate bodies of power have framed their unending violence as mundane, justified, and even—through the very bodies of those they exploit—“natural.”

While Pachirat repeatedly reminds his readers that very few slaughterhouse workers interact with whole animal carcasses (never mind living beasts), material signs of animal life are everywhere. This is most obvious, of course, in Pachirat’s actual interactions with cattle as they come into the plant. While the movement of these animals into the slaughterhouse is at a frantic pace, their animal individuality, as well as Pachirat’s admiration for these beasts, “caked in mud and feces from their time in the feedlot, the transport truck, and the slaughterhouse holding pens” though they are, shines through (Pachirat 145). As he describes it, these creatures “are magnificent, awe-inspiring. Some are muscular and powerful, their horns sharp and strong. Others are soft and velvety, their coats sleek and sensuous” (145). Yet even in the few spaces within a slaughterhouse where a worker may experience moments of “charged unmediated physical contact” with a living nonhuman, the encouraged slippage between a definition of an animal as a breathing whole and an animal as a set of nonliving pieces permeates the narrative (145). Describing how the “knocker” starts the “disassembly” of a cow by driving a steel bolt through its head, for example, Pachirat puts emphasis less on the cow’s whole being than on the creature’s penetrated skull, flying gray matter, and bubbling blood. While he notes that sometimes a cow “will bleed profusely and thrash about wildly while the knocker tries to shoot it again”—this bloody animal fight for existence reminiscent of hunting narratives’ climactic “battles”—the reader is soon whisked away along with the dying cow into a step-by-step process of mechanized animal disassembly (54). From the point of “death” at the knocker’s hand onwards, the cow is not only made to die by degrees, but further undergoes what is, in Pachirat’s

words, a lengthy process of “de-animalization,” each step “further decreas[ing] the visual resemblance of carcass to animal” (70). In this, it is worth quoting a passage from *Every Twelve Seconds* on how the visual effect of this process creates a flattening between living and dead beasts:

Row after row of headless, hoofless, hideless cattle, split in half and suspended by their hind hocks from overhead hooks, fill the room. Inanimate under the white halogen glow, they seem unreal, like giant plastic cow parts ready for assembly in the romper room of gigantic children: line up the rib bones on part A against the rib bones on part B and snap together to form a hollow, gutless outer shell. To complete, add head and hooves, and paint to the desired hide pattern (114).

I have already spoken about how taxidermied animals are made to speak “truth” by virtue “of being [composed of] authentic animal skins” (Poliquin 95). Pachirat indicates that this is equally true of disassembled “food” animals; the “unreality” of their former existence as sentient, feeling creatures seems to be proven by the sheer impression that these animal pieces could be reassembled into the beasts they were before being slaughtered and butchered, the resultant entity having lost nothing of its former creaturely liveliness. And indeed, so strong is the link created between living whole animals and dead matter that even the “live cattle in the chutes are referred to as ‘beef’” (Pachirat 230). For all practical purposes, in other words, the equation of the dead commodified animal thing and the live animal born and raised for commodification has been achieved.

While this material and rhetorical process of “de-animalization”/ re-interpretation of “animality” may be shocking when illustrated through the plight of a singular beast, I have noted that one feature that separates *Every Twelve Seconds* from many other works of the Fecund Dystopia genre is the often-emotionless tone Pachirat takes in narrating the inner workings of an industrial slaughterhouse. On its own, such a tone works to demonstrate how effectively the industrial slaughterhouse system renders killings that would otherwise be understood as shocking and upsetting into normal, even mundane events (this is a feature Pachirat is well aware of, even beginning his narrative by recounting the paradoxical “livid...indignation” of slaughterhouse employees who witnessed policemen gun down a runaway cow, all while their jobs have them killing and disassembling thousands of cows per day) (2). Furthermore, the note of infernal mundanity that defines *Every Twelve Seconds* is present as both a rhetorical and narrative character. Never mind what becomes of one cow, Pachirat’s work is shot through with descriptions of the heaps of organic pieces—both “commodity” and “waste”—that were carved from the bodies of dead beasts. Early on in the text, Pachirat notes that in the process of “de-animalization”—which includes, among around 121 steps, “the severing of the cow’s head...and tail...removal of intestines and internal organs...and vertical splitting of the carcass through the spinal cord”—a “massive concentration and accumulation of smaller body parts” is produced (70). And when it is one’s job to handle what is effectively an endless deluge of just one of these myriad pieces of “deconstructed flesh” for lengthy stretches of time, even very material proof of “the staggering *volume* of the killing” becomes a morass which effectively dulls and even eventually denies the sense that mass slaughter is wrong (118, 72).

Focused as he is on the myriad effects of visualization and concealment in maintaining particular systems of power as exemplified by the industrial slaughterhouse, Pachirat does note that there are some animal-thing “products” that “offer a haunting image of vast destruction” and, as such, still hold the power to shock (72). The “head line,” for example, is a conveyor that trundles only complete cattle heads into the next steps of de-animalization. As these body parts

contain “the face” and as such “refer most unambiguously to life,” they present, in a literally visceral image, just how many lives one slaughterhouse takes (72). Yet the technology of animal disassembly has but grown ever-more intrusive over the past century. As such, it works not against but in tandem with the vast volume of “food” animals being “processed” to effectively erase all understandings and visualizations of animals as animal. I have mentioned Pachirat’s attention to the minute steps by which an animal is transformed into dead matter. From the beginning of his book, Pachirat indicates how staggering the number of these “parts” becomes by first citing the raw number of live beasts that are brought to slaughter in but one year: in 2009 alone, “some 8,520,000 chickens, 245,786,000 turkeys, 113,600,000 pigs, 33,300,000 cattle, 22,767,000 ducks, 2,768,000 sheep and lambs, and 944,200 calves” were killed and “converted” into food (3). Multiply this number of creatures who were “destined” for disassembly by the vast array of animal-things that come from but one corpse, and one can comprehend how a slaughterhouse worker—whose job puts them into constant contact with never-ending conveyor belts of these parts—would quickly become numb to the slaughter they directly participate in. The large tubs cow ears are tossed into after being cut off, for example, “will hold more than five thousand ears” by the end of the day (68). In other words, around 2,500 cows had been fully “processed” in the span of but ten hours. And these tubs of ears are not the least of such material animal abstractification. An industrial slaughterhouse dedicates much of its space to commodifying more ambiguous, less recognizably “animal” pieces like “weasands, hearts, and livers,” for which, in Pachirat’s words, “it takes a concentrated act of imagination to reconstruct the whole animal from these bits and pieces” (72). It is thus not just the disassembly of a living beast, but the volume at which this disassembly occurs through which the “homogenization of the animal” is achieved, and “a raw material, an input” is created from flesh (40). As Pachirat sums it up, “by liver number 2,394 or foot number 9,576, it hardly matters *what* is being cut, shorn, sliced, shredded, hung, or washed” (138). The animals, as it were, have been completely lost to their parts.

It would be false to claim that it is only through the actual slaughter and “processing” of living creatures that the line between “animal” and “thing” is blurred. As demonstrated by the widespread use of artificial insemination (AI) and genetic modification for the “production” of creatures such as cows, pigs and turkeys (with physical traits being selected to promote “statistical decreases in process variation”), technological innovation of a particular sort has created a world in which billions of animals are, from zygote to dismemberment, as much human constructs as they are “natural” creatures (Blanchette 105). And indeed, while Pachirat chose to criticize the slaughterhouse system through an autobiography—a genre that inherently has greater claims to truth than a novel—he defines the entire enterprise as “a fiction” (159). This “fiction,” as he lays it out, may be more explicitly expressed in obvious narrative attempts to alleviate a sense of personal responsibility, for example in how plant workers have “mythologized” the knocker into “*the* killer among the 800” slaughterhouse employees involved in “de-animalizing” the animals (238). Yet it is one in which every individual plays a part, and which ends with the “lesson” that the creatures being killed do not think, or feel, or possess any claim to moral consideration; they are instead, whether living or dead, only a “carcass,” only “beef” (66, 155). This is a fiction that is repeated a countless number of times in a countless number of ways at every industrialized slaughterhouse every day and to such an overwhelming extent that it has effectively, in both the minds of those doing the slaughter and those enjoying its products, ceased to be a fiction and become the world’s reality. Yet definitions of “the animal” have never held consequences for only nonhuman creatures. For biopolitics “acts

fundamentally...at the...more elemental level called ‘flesh,’” and as “the commodification and private ownership of life in the services of late capitalism” is the defining feature of the contemporary industrial slaughterhouse, it is—as *Every Twelve Seconds*, in keeping with the Fecund Dystopia genre demonstrates—far from only the animals that are mechanized, commodified, and even “disassembled” within this space (Wolfe 50, 51). Even—and often especially—as they work to convert animals into things, the “kill floor’s” human actors find a place in Pachirat’s autobiography as both individuals but also, as with the cattle they “convert,” as the raw resources of one vast, “de-animalizing,” “de-humanizing” enterprise.

I have repeatedly argued that one defining feature of many works from the Fecund Dystopia genre is that they explicitly compare the suffering of humans and animals not to denigrate or elevate either, but as an attempt to draw attention to the overarching systems under which both forms of life are made to suffer. This is undeniably the case in *Every Twelve Seconds*; as emotionless as his phrasing can be when recounting an act of animal cruelty or explaining the minutiae of slaughterhouse rendering technologies, Pachirat does not shy away from pathos when describing the plights of the “kill floor” workers he had labored among. Some of this is shown, as with his account of animal suffering, by more abstractly listing the dangers a slaughterhouse worker will encounter. The “various injuries ‘common to this type of work,’” he recounts being told in a company-required informational video (so the slaughterhouse could not be sued, having provided “adequate warning”), include “crushing, cutting, repetitive-motion disorders, back injuries, chemical burns, and the severing of fingers, hands, and other body parts” (Pachirat 104). As with Sinclair’s own experience with working on a “kill floor” himself, however, it is the more personalized stories from slaughterhouse workers that provide a more immediate sense of tragedy.

Having had to change the names of all mentioned individuals as he did (the number of undocumented immigrants in the factory farm meant there was a good chance any one of them could have gotten in serious trouble if Pachirat had used their true monikers), there is no lack of personal stories of vulnerability and desperation from which Pachirat could pull. Pachirat’s colleague Ramón, for example, had become “increasingly exhausted and quit just before completing a full year of work on the kill floor. His knees and hands had become inflamed from constantly standing in one place performing the same repetitive motion” (210). But a brief glance at slaughterhouse turnover statistics reveal that Ramón’s story is far from a unique one: as reported in 2016, the “furious pace of the work causes a set of chronic physical ailments called musculoskeletal disorders...that cause sprains, strains, or inflammation” (Lowe). These ailments are so common in slaughterhouse workers that “companies report constant employee turnover,” with “some estimates put[ing] the average turn-over rate at more than 100 percent a year,” and with individuals such as Ramón becoming—to use Sinclair’s still relevant phrasing—but one of the “damaged parts” of “the great packing machine” (Lowe; Pachirat 86; Sinclair 65). In another anecdote that stands as but one manifestation of the multitude of vulnerabilities many slaughterhouse workers live under, Pachirat relates why another colleague, Ray, had to quit. As an undocumented person, Ray had been paying an American citizen named Rick “\$100 a week out of a paycheck of about \$400” for “the use of his social security number so that he can work in the plant...[now] Rick is demanding \$150 each week or he will turn him over to the immigration authorities. ‘I can’t pay that,’ Ray says, tears welling up” (Pachirat 172). In other words, as Pachirat summarizes the situation, Ray had been “giving up nearly a quarter of his wages just to be able to spend ten-hour days in freezing temperatures” (172). Yet having been pushed beyond endurance in what was, for him, a requirement to work at this one plant, Ray’s

only other option was to “‘apply at another plant now and use my brother’s name’” (172). There is no authority that Ray could turn to that might alleviate this situation, and everyone involved—from Rick to the slaughterhouse CEOs—know this.

Factory farms are, as they were over a hundred years ago, notorious for pulling their “labor source” from the ranks of desperate and vulnerable populations, with undocumented immigrants and marginalized “natural” citizens making up the bulk of slaughterhouse workers. In fact, by exploiting the loophole in the 13th Amendment (which bans slavery and involuntary servitude “except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted”) an increasing number of prisoners are made to work what is essentially slave labor in industrial slaughterhouses (“The United States Constitution,” 13th Amendment, sec. 1). Yet for countless humans, this is the only kind of work to be had, and they would be even worse off without it. And indeed, early on in the autobiography Pachirat writes that while filling out an application for a “kill floor” position he felt himself “tinged with guilt. What if I am hired, and this denies someone else a desperately needed job” (Pachirat 90)? One may be considered and treated as but a cog in a lethal, demanding machine, but capitalism has ensured that many would be grateful for even this position.

“Laborers and would-be laborers,” Pachirat writes in a 21st century version of Sinclair’s definition of slaughterhouse workers as “one of the packer’s hogs,” are like “live cattle,” just “inputs in the production process” (88; Sinclair 264; Pachirat 88). Besides the intensively hierarchical social structures at play (“no more than twenty-five work in the front office...[managing] decisions and processes that determine much of the texture of life” for the other hundreds of workers), the positions of most laborers as replaceable cogs is enforced in everything from their pay (“between seven and eight dollars an hour”) to the furious pace of “the chain” to their clothing: “In fabrication, workers wear identical white frocks and stand side by side, giving the appearance of a solid mass of interchangeable units” (28, 175, 40-41). Yet more than all these more “traditional” measures of exploitation, Pachirat also provides an intimate look into how processes of de-animalization are accompanied by a continual de-humanization within a worker’s own mind. In fact, in a similar fashion to how the cows’ bodies are manufactured into particular kinds of things, so too are human laborers coerced through nothing less than their bodies’ and minds’ defense mechanisms into the shapes that suit the slaughterhouse’s enterprise.

It is a rare work of the Fecund Dystopia genre that indicates the industrial slaughterhouse was built around anything but maximizing profits from the death of nonhuman beasts and the exploitative manipulation of its human workers’ “animal” senses. And in the techno-organic mechanism of the industrial slaughterhouse, as described in *Every Twelve Seconds*, the positions of human workers have also been “refined” to suit the demands of the slaughterhouse by forcing their minds to see-saw between acute boredom and intense concentration. It is worth quoting one “kill floor” employee in full, as they articulate the frantic pace at which a human mind must swing between these extremes:

When you’re on the line working, your brain shuts off after about twenty minutes and every minute after that feels like another ten hours went by, but then you look down at your watch and it’s like—Fuck, only five minutes have passed? When you do work like this, there’s just no way you can concentrate on what you’re doing for an entire workday... You have to fucking switch your mind off to survive. And when you do that, you make a mistake, and then you’re like, Fuck, man, did I just do that (199)?

Slaughterhouse jobs, in other words, render human beings into creatures that are not simply paid to behave as repetitive-motion machines, but to live in “a terror of monotony” (137).

As Pachirat describes his own experience, “I have an unshakable sensation that the limits of my world are rapidly closing in,” that he as a person will be “engulf[ed]...in the regularity and sameness of the cooler” (137). For the worker, in other words, the slaughterhouse is not simply the place of work, or even the kind of sequestered, hidden space separated from the rest of society. It is instead a “roaring, vibrating totality” that encompasses both the machine, animal, and human “mechanics” that make up its operation, transforming them *all* into what is essentially nonliving, commodifiable, things (138).

While it does seem impossible on paper (as it were) that even those humans directly interacting with astonishing numbers of living animals and their raw pieces would all but forget what kind of killing they are performing, Pachirat presents it as a perfectly understandable phenomenon. “At the rate of one cow, steer, or heifer slaughtered every twelve seconds per nine-hour working day, the reality that the work of the slaughterhouse centers around *killing* evaporates into a routinized, almost hallucinatory, blur” (138). The sight, he goes on, “of liver after liver descending against a dull white wall, hour after hour, day after day, week after week...constitutes an endless, infinite landscape in which *the slaughtered cow has no place*” (139, italics mine). And indeed, even those workers whose job it is to force cattle into the slaughterhouse as quickly as possible are not given the time, thinking space, or even the visuals to acknowledge these beasts as individual creatures. This last and perhaps most shocking example of a slaughterhouse’s success in “de-animalizing” even living animals is made particularly clear in Pachirat’s story of his reluctance to use electric prods on the cattle: trying instead to use plastic paddles to maneuver the cows into the factory, Pachirat is accosted by a co-worker who “sprints up the walkway from the squeeze pen, grabs the plastic paddle out of my hand, and shoves the electric prod into it. ‘You motherfucking pussy! he yells. ‘Do your job and use the fucking hotshot!...do your motherfucking job and keep this line tight’” (148)! Another co-worker, who has no qualms with “shoving his electric prod into the anus of one of the animals, causing it to kick back and then lunge forward into the animal in front of it,” responds to Pachirat query on why use the electric prods at all with “‘I like to have my work. And if we don’t keep these cows moving through, they’re gonna call us up to the office and we’re going to get fired. That’s why’” (148). And Pachirat, for all his qualms, writes that in the space of the industrial slaughterhouse, “once the abstract goal of keeping the line tight takes precedence over the individuality of the animals, it really does make sense to apply the electric shock regularly. Rather than electrocuting an individual animal, the prod keeps a steady stream of raw material entering the plant, satisfies co-workers and supervisors, and saves me from having to expend the energy it takes to move the animals with plastic paddles” (149). This is a space and practice, Pachirat concludes, where “‘fucked up’ becomes routine, normal, and it is any sign of resistance to using the electric prods...to piling the animals up like dominoes to be killed that becomes characterized as abnormal” (158). How easy it is to change a human into someone who thinks this way.

The “sharkishness” required of Melville’s whalers, the brutality forced upon Sinclair’s plant workers, and even the numb acceptance of atrocity defining LePan and Atwood’s professional-class consumers are the stuff of fiction. As Pachirat demonstrates, however, they reflect the encouraged mentality of the real labors of a world under capitalism to an astonishing degree. Quoting political activist Susan Sontag, Pachirat finds good reason to note her argument that making “the repugnant visible...may as well result in apathy as action”; the implication of so many depictions of suffering is that “‘no, it cannot be stopped’” (254, Sontag qtd. Pachirat 254). *Every Twelve Seconds* implies that this is a deliberately fostered mentality that spares no

one, and Pachirat certainly does not spare himself in his recollections of what it was like laboring under such conditions. In a scene that encapsulates such fostered apathy, Pachirat writes on how his co-workers had electrocuted frantic cattle harder and harder so that the presence of a “downed”—that is, collapsed—cow did not stop the flow of “raw material” into the slaughterhouse. Pachirat had watched agonized beasts “stomp on [the downed cow’s] neck and underbelly trying to escape the electric shock. Leaning against the wall, I look at [another co-worker], who says shakily, ‘Man, this isn’t right, running them other cattle over this cow like that. I’m not going to take part in this.’ I nod my head in agreement, but both of us continue to stand against the wall” (155).

In October 2017, the rural addiction treatment center Christian Alcoholics & Addicts in Recovery (CAAIR) was revealed to be, in essence, a slave camp. Having been started in 2007 “by chicken company executives struggling to find workers,” these executives discovered that in offering “treatment” to those threatened with jail time for nonviolent crimes, they “could supply [chicken slaughterhouses] with a cheap and captive labor force” (Walter & Harris). Near the end of 2020, as “hundreds of its employees were falling ill to Covid-19, managers and supervisors at a Tyson Foods pork processing plant in Waterloo, Iowa, were placing bets on how many of their employees would contract the virus” (Aratani). Before this particular plant was forced to close, “more than 1,000 employees out of about 2,800... had tested positive for Covid-19,” with at least “four workers” dying as a result (Aratani; Foley). For all an animal might be seen alive and whole, it is now more common to encounter one as “rivulets of blood running through uncovered drains...decomposing kidneys and lungs floating in open cesspools of feces” (Pachirat 23). Looking over more than one hundred years of Fecund Dystopia narratives, it would seem that the only change they have ultimately sparked is not one leading to an effective outcry against the systems they sought to condemn. Rather, they have added to a kind of resignation to the idea that the thing-ification of *all* flesh is now, inexorably, our “natural” destiny.

Chapter 3: White Women, Black Apes, and Melancholic Trends in Conservation

Section One: Great Apes, Nature, and the Popular Transformation of Both from Savage Beasts to Gentle Giants as Displayed in King Kong (1933) and Mighty Joe Young (1949)

For all that there is a fecund and wildly diverse menagerie of animal narratives, it is the conceit of this dissertation that common framings of nonhuman creatures can often be roughly grouped under two broad categories. In the first part of this dissertation, I used hunting narratives and examples of the Fecund Dystopia genre to exemplify the power of, and but a few of the consequences, that result from the common perception of animals as essentially “objects,” i.e., beings that possess no “human” attributes and which therefore do not belong in the sphere of moral consideration. For billions of animals, the representational and material thing-ification of their lives, deaths, and bodies has a far-reaching history that continues unabated—and exacerbated—into the present day. Simultaneously, however, the attention upon a growing number of creatures has focused on documenting and displaying how “human-like”—and therefore how worthy of human love and protection—they may be. There are, of course, countless examples from the distant past to the contemporary era of humans anthropomorphizing animals in every form of cultural expression from mythology to children’s stories to scientific writings. More recent examples of animal “humanization,” however, have been significantly influenced by Darwin’s theory of evolution, which profoundly altered the “way the boundaries between *homo sapiens* and other species are represented” (Lorenz 156). Of particular importance for the focus of this dissertation, the introduction and acceptance of evolution was significant because it provided irrefutable scientific evidence of the biological—and thus to an important extent the cultural and social—porousness between the categories of “human” and “animal.” Partially as a result, there has been a major shift in how willing many people are to believe that traits long believed to be uniquely “human” (such as tool use, future planning, and even speech) are also present among nonhuman animals. And with the reasoning that nonhuman creatures are a type of “people” too based on their possession of these traits, the question of to what extent nonhuman creatures can be justifiably exploited or exterminated in the service of human enterprises is even more a live-wire issue than ever. Much of the debates surrounding which creatures should and can be categorized as a kind of “person” is often directly dependent upon how many measurable “human” traits these animals possess. As such, a particularly intelligible example of how thoroughly relatively recent observations about the “humanness” of certain creatures can radically change representations of and behavior towards such beasts can be found in the animal narratives surrounding African great apes. Accounts concerning the chimpanzee and gorilla exemplify not only how animal narratives shape and are shaped by the lives of actual creatures, but also how thoroughly such narratives that are “only” about animals are embroiled in ongoing and profoundly consequential debates on humanity’s “natural” roles in their own societies, and even on planet Earth as a whole. In this, an analysis of the history, narrative details, and significant differences between the adventurer/screenwriter/film director/producer Merian C. Cooper’s influential giant ape films *King Kong* (1933) and *Mighty Joe Young* (1949) provide a helpful beginning focal point. Taken together, these films stand as a prime specimen of how colonial imaginings shaped understandings on the most “human” of our fellow creatures up into the 20th century and reinforced beliefs about the “naturalness” of imperial hierarchies. Yet they also indicate how rapidly, starting from the 1940s, this perspective began to shift from

visions of monstrous apes to the gentle, tragic, and even heroic giants of today's popular imaginings.

While much of the focus of this section is specifically on Cooper's giant ape films, their defining characteristics are made more legible by an analysis of previous presentations of gorillas and chimpanzees in the Western imagination. For even before Darwin, the notable physical (and sometimes behavioral) similarities between apes and humans ensured that our closest nonhuman kin have long acted as lightning rods for questions, concerns, and indeed raging debates over "the discourse on species, gender, race, and the status of human beings within the natural order"; these primates, in other words, have for centuries often served as sounding boards (and scapegoats) for particular desires and demands towards human and nonhuman behavior (Lorenz 156). Indeed, one of the most useful insights to be gleaned from studying ape tales is how clear they make it that animals, even "human-like" animals such as gorillas and chimpanzees, are often denied "the particularity of nonhuman species and [are reduced] to objects of the human imagination," with all the seemingly incompatible contradictions that such an imagination contains (Lorenz 164). Consider, to cite an earlier example, how Carl Akeley described gorillas as his "particular friends" even while hunting them for the purpose of taxidermy's literal object-ification (111). His words are valuable for offering a demonstration of such contradictions, yet for this chapter also serves as an example of how, at least in some minds, the image of the gorilla from a near-demonic entity to a gentle giant began to shift relatively early in the 20th century. For a good portion of the 1900s and for centuries beforehand, however, this perception was in the clear minority. Apes were instead primarily and unambiguously framed as living embodiments of humanity's most ignoble, "beast-like" traits and, later on, the horrors of "untamed" (i.e., uncolonized) landscapes. This mentality is perhaps most (in)famously embodied in *King Kong*, the starring giant ape having become a "global cultural icon" as soon as he crashed into the cinematic landscape in 1933 (Lorenz 157). In fact, although Kong—in both the plot of his first movie and as the subject of an "unprecedented blending of a stop-motion monster with live-action footage of actors"—was often described as something newly discovered and never-before seen, his story is very traditional (one is even tempted to say conservative) in regard to what tropes on race, gender, and perceptions of gorillas its narrative is founded on (Berman). This movie not only adheres to then long-standing portrayals of gorillas as vicious, brutal creatures, but also encodes black humans as bestial through their symbolic embodiment in Kong. Its very plot—a mishmash of light commentary on filmmaking, "colonial fantasies," and "exotic adventure"—is focused on the terror of a "love plot between a 'black beast' and a white woman"; the supposed threat of black masculinity to white womanhood as embodied in a literal animal is front and center in the film (Lubrich and Liebal 50). These are representations with a long and violent history, for which *King Kong*, as it were, is only the tip of the Empire State Building.

The portrayal of gorillas—and by deliberately-fostered extension Africans, indeed *all* dark-skinned humans—as lecherous monsters was well established in European and Euroamerican societies long before Kong made his appearance on the silver screen. While nonhuman primates had been used in Europe as symbols of sin, foolishness, lust, and evil since the medieval ages, during colonization the demonization of apes—and the attribution of ape-like characteristics to Africans—became "particularly strong in the English imagination" (Sorenson 58-59). Indeed, while many members of Western civilization are even now often recalcitrant to note any significant similarities between humans and animals, the European naturalists who "first encountered the great apes of Africa and Asia in the seventeenth and eighteenth" centuries

composed “highly anthropomorphized” descriptions of the creatures (Schiebinger 5). Here—as with many another human/animal comparison performed for the sake of justifying violence—such anthropomorphism was often wielded to the detriment of colonized humans, rather than to the advantage of the apes. As professor of the history of science Londa Schiebinger has summarized, early “scientific” descriptions of gorillas, chimpanzees, and orangutans not only frequently described male apes as “wild, lascivious, and given to violent acts of interspecies rape,” but that race was often included in these descriptions as a “significant factor in the search for a clear and distinct line dividing humans from brutes. European naturalists tended to describe apes more sympathetically than they did Africans, highlighting the human character of apes while emphasizing the purported simian qualities of Africans... [the colonial administrator and slave-owner] Edward Long, for example, did not think ‘that an oran-outang husband would be any dishonor to an Hottentot female’” (5). Africans, Schiebinger continues, “were often described as apes; at different times both were cast as ‘missing links’ in the great chain of being. This provided a convenient rationale [as with Edward Long] for slavery; it also led Europeans to treat in similar ways the Africans and great apes brought to Europe for scientific investigation. Both were exhibited in menageries and coffeehouses” (5). Such assumptions about the “nature” of apes and Africans, as it was, were two sides of the same colonial sentiment. It is not without centuries of evidence that philosopher Frantz Fanon argued that when a colonist seeks to describe “the natives” fully, he “refers constantly to the bestiary”; the perceived “savage” character of “exotic” animals, particularly that of the great apes, has long been utilized as a particularly powerful rationale for imperialism, colonialism, and all their attendant violence (7).

The insistence in the Western imagination on similarities between African humans and Africa’s apes was so strong that—in one extreme example of the consequences of this mentality—the (in)famous 19th century French taxidermist Jules Verreaux² created one of the world’s few examples of human taxidermy after he had allegedly “attended a native funeral in Botswana and returned later to dig up the body of a bushman, which became known as ‘El Negro,’” and which he had “procured” (and he was later lauded for his “fearlessness” in this matter) “not without danger to my own life” (Turner 24; Verreaux qtd. Westerman). The resultant “object” had been displayed “like yet another wildlife specimen” in the Darder Museum of Natural History until he was returned to Gaborone in October 2000 for “a Christian burial” (Westerman). As analyzed in chapter one, making “trophies” of the creatures one had conquered was a popular pastime for colonizing powers. There was then at least one instance in which this was presented as acceptable for colonized humans as well. And indeed, perhaps because gorillas were so strongly linked in the minds of colonialists to the humans they were subjugating, these apes were a favorite “game” animal for colonial servicemen seeking to add to their personal prestige, as well as to “prove” the superiority of European civilization by “purging a [colonized] country of its wildlife” (Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier 113). The famous hunter Paul Belloni du Chaillu—already brought up as the first white man to kill a gorilla—stands as an example of this mentality in both his descriptions of Africans as “naturally” inferior humans as well as in his portrayal of gorillas as “hellish dream creatures” for which “no description can exceed...the ferocity of its attack” (qtd. Sorenson 61). Most other accounts of gorillas from the middle to late 1800s follow this pattern of description, with some of them, such as that of the German commercial traveler Herr Paschen of Schwerin, also taking pains to detail how gorillas were both “fearful monsters” and sexual predators (Gott and Weir 16). This perception of gorillas became

² Whiles Jules is most likely, different sources give different answers as to whether it was Édouard or Jules or both of the Verreaux brothers who taxidermied this human.

so dominant that in the 1890s Richard Garner, one of the first white men to attempt to scientifically study wild gorillas, spent “112 days in a specially constructed cage to protect himself from the savage apes he hoped to encounter”; contemporary primatologists will be unsurprised to learn that while he was eaten alive by mosquitoes, the “gorillas mainly avoided him” (Sorenson 66). Even so, by 1902 the portrayal of gorillas as both “the most dangerous of animals” as well as creatures consumed by “unbridled libidinous desire” was firmly established, with little to no counter narrative to challenge such a belief (Gott and Weir 15). It is in this context that the legend of King Kong was born.

Released in 1933 “and immediately and phenomenally successful,” it is unsurprising that Kong—given the histories and assumptions that informed him—was presented in his first iteration as a monstrous, lascivious creature that must ultimately be killed for the good of Western civilization (Stymeist 396). In the movie, film producer Carl Denham and his crew travel (in true colonialist fashion) to the amorphously remote/tropical/exotic Skull Island with a boat full of rifles, “enough ammunition to blow up [a] harbor” and gas bombs, each one strong enough “to knock out an elephant” (*King Kong* 00:07:45, 00:07:48). Their aim is to get a commercial movie of an entity called Kong, which Denham describes as something “monstrous. All-powerful. Still living, still holding that island”—where the native inhabitants “have slipped back” into cultural degenerates and exist as but the pitiful remnants of a “higher civilization”—in “a grip of deadly fear” (00:21:10). In fact, Skull Island’s natives—the “only black people seen in the movie”—are presented as so outside the purview of civilized, “true” humanity that they are “firmly linked with Kong” not only through “the sound of the drums to the ritual dance in monkey suits,” but also through their portrayal as a people who regularly sacrifice young women of their tribe to the colossal ape as “bride[s] of Kong” (Phillips 936; *King Kong* 00:33:48). While insinuations of a literally monstrous form of miscegenation between Kong and Fay Wray is the primary tension point of this film, it also contains a hint of Edward Long’s statement on the “acceptability” of bestiality if the woman in question is black. Combined with the fact that it falls to Denham and his crew to later subdue a rampaging Kong, the film is also very much a reinstatement of the “White Man’s Burden” as similarly inscribed in *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo*; in both narratives, it is up to the true-human (i.e. white) colonizers to save the animalized (i.e. black) colonized from some “native” problem, here embodied in a bloodthirsty indigenous animal, that they are unable to handle themselves. Within such a representation, “conquests and exploitation seem justified in Cooper’s film by the exoticism and wildness of Kong’s realm,” with Kong himself standing as the most obvious “proof of the undeveloped world’s barbarity” (Lorenz 167).

King Kong is a work that copies numerous story beats from the “exotic” adventure and hunting narratives of the 1800s and early 1900s. The film’s true “genius,” however, lies in its insertion of the helpless Ann Darrow—who as the movie’s single blonde female embodies the idealized white women whose value was for centuries placed in their role of “breed[ing] manpower to fuel military strength and industrial growth”—into the “colonizer vs. the wild” story standard (Schiebinger 179). In other words, *King Kong* presents a scenario in which a type of human long positioned as a significant (and exceedingly glamorized) source of colonial society’s ongoing perpetuation (i.e., white women) comes to be under threat. Fay Wray’s role as the perpetually screaming *demoiselle en détresse* Ann—whom Skull Island’s feather-and-paint bedazzled chief calls “the golden woman” and requests to buy as “a gift for Kong...offering to trade six of his [dark] women for [the white one]”—calls attention to another long-standing use of gorillas: the expression of fears about black men and the perceived sexual, and thus

generational, threat they were believed to hold for white women and thus “civilized” society as a whole (*King Kong* 00:34:37). In *King Kong*, not even a full day passes after the men of Skull Island lay their eyes on her that the “crazy black” islanders kidnap Ann to sacrifice her to an even more wild, savage, dark, and libidinous figure than these natives: Kong himself (00:40:57).

In his essay “Negro Characters as Seen by White Authors,” Sterling Brown notes that a popular character type in what he calls “Ku Klux Klan fiction” is that of “‘The Brute Negro’” (qtd. Spiegel 34). This trope is, as Brown describes it, “‘a gorilla-like imbecile, who ‘springs like a tiger,’ has the ‘black claws of a beast,’” and who features in stories that have a very similar plot structure: a black man rapes a white woman, thus sparking “‘a glorious ride of the Knights on a Holy Crusade to avenge Southern civilization’” and which ends with the just lynching of the black “brute” (qtd. Spiegel 35). Stories of this sort became particularly popular after Emancipation, with the “abhorrent” nature of interracial coupling often expressed through images of white women being menaced by gorillas and gorilla-like hominids. This “horror” perhaps takes its most famous form in *King Kong*, which among other categorizations has been defined as “a perfect statement of the terrors which lie behind the images of black masculinity” (Phillips 935). Indeed, Kong’s interactions with Ann “racializes and sexualizes the film,” with the monster ape even engaging in “foreplay” with Ann when he “holds her in one hand and tickles her with his long index finger” as a mostly naked and screaming Ann struggles to escape (Lorenz 162; Phillips 936). While the film’s “motto” may be that “‘It was beauty killed the beast,’” with its attention to the titillating horror of Kong’s attraction towards Ann *King Kong* stands more “a fantasy that tells us exactly how the white world of the time saw reality. White (civilized) men ruled over black (uncivilized) men, and their savagery had to be kept firmly in check” (*King Kong* 01:43:35; Phillips 936). But eighteen years before *King Kong* was released, “D.W. Griffiths was making movies which glorified the Ku Klux Klan”—*Birth of a Nation*, in a prototype story beat for *King Kong*’s, featured a black man threatening to rape a white woman, driving her to suicide rather than submit to such a “monstrous” coupling— “as it went about its self-appointed task of putting uppity blacks in their place” (Phillips 936). From black ape to black men, these highly popular and extremely influential films indicate that the “whole world knew what happened when black men got out of hand. They went on the rampage like Kong, and like Kong, went out and got themselves a white woman” (Phillips 937). When Denham exclaims that Kong has “‘always been king of his world, but we’ll teach him fear’” upon capturing the monstrous gorilla, his words are a filmic repeat of the sentiments that his human “counterparts” must be treated the same (*King Kong* 01:24:10).

In its very last scene, *King Kong* does present a “somewhat sympathetic view of the fate of the ‘primitive’ in modern industrialized society...in which Kong meets his end at the hands of the military-industrial entertainment complex” (Wexman 289). While being further and further weakened as volleys of bullets from biplanes find their mark as Kong flails futilely atop the Empire State Building (an architectural achievement that was, at the time, “a key symbol of [American] modernity and progress”), Kong’s Claymation face is pulled into visibly sad expressions, and he seems shocked at the sight of his own blood (Stymeist 398). Melancholy music plays as the once-mighty ape looks out over New York, regards Ann mournfully one last time, and then puts her safely back down on top of the skyscraper before plummeting to his death. Yet even with this ending, this film is far more focused on “the threat represented by the beast’s attraction to the ‘golden woman’” (Wexman 289). Continually insisting on a “Beauty and the Beast” comparison between Kong and Ann, Denham nevertheless eschews the original fable’s sympathy for the monster, instead announcing the underlying imperialist ideals and

assumptions of the film when he states that Kong—rather than being a victim of Denham’s crew and their violent conversion of “exotic” creatures into entertainment— “could have stayed safe where he was, but he couldn’t stay away from beauty” (*King Kong* 01:26:30). As if confirming the “natural” and monstrous sexual appetites of gorillas and “gorilla-like” black men, Ann is described as having “lived through an experience no other woman has dreamed of,” the language here akin to what might be used to describe a victim of sexual assault (01:28:48). It is furthermore her obviously human and obviously white “future husband” Jack, who had rescued Ann “from the very grasp of Kong,” who ultimately saves her again by suggesting that biplanes be used to gun down the enraged ape, who’s desire for the “golden woman” sent him on a destructive rampage through the streets of New York City (01:28:48). The audience is finally told in no uncertain terms that being enraptured by the beauty of this white woman is what ultimately kills Kong, with Denham remarking in the film’s final lines, “It wasn’t the airplanes. It was Beauty killed the Beast” (01:43:35). If Kong hadn’t been so aroused by Ann’s beauty, or if he had at least been able to control it, the movie all but explicitly tells us, he would have never been killed. In this narrative, “woman is not just beauty...she is ‘endangered beauty,’” who we see scared out of her wits and in need of rescue by white men from the very beginning due to her direct exposure to a “black ape representing [the] remorseless phallic potency” of black men (Weir and Gott 64). For all the sympathy that he might garner at the ending, *King Kong* embodies—as did all the gorillas killed by white hunters and converted in “trophies” before him— “an imperialist parable about the risks posed by contact between the primitive and the civilized [and] a cautionary tale about rampant [black] male sexuality and the dangers of interracial intercourse” (Weir and Gott 70).

King Kong was a sensation from its first showing, even though, and perhaps because, it embodied a plethora of colonialist and racist assumptions. The movie was never really about gorillas, but rather, as with most Western media before it, used gorillas as a screen “upon which to project fears of sexuality and uncontrolled drives, theories of criminality, and narratives of human and primate difference” (Gott and Weir 8). And as excitingly new as the Claymation Kong was perceived as being in his first appearance, there was in truth nothing unique about the film’s underlying ideas or even basic story beats. This movie’s image and use of the gorilla in the 1930s was in almost every sense but a continuation of all the ape tales informed by colonialism before it. Indeed, Cooper—who had made his reputation “in 1920s ethnographic cinema”—even stated that he had first picked up his fascination for gorillas as a young boy from a copy of Paul du Chaillu’s 1861 best-selling *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa*; du Chaillu’s work, as noted before, not only depicted gorillas as virtual devils, but also held a “dim view of the ‘dreadful and dreary lives’ of Africans” and proposed that only “‘the cunning hand and brain of the white man’ could improve their situation” (Erb 15; Gott and Weir 50; Sorenson 66). Yet even with such historical backing and widespread success, *King Kong* is far from the final demarcation of how gorillas would be commonly portrayed in Western media. For even more than the rapid shift in portrayals of hunting exemplified by the radically different tones in Patterson’s and Akeley’s narratives, over the latter half of the 20th century and beyond the image of gorillas as infernal would come to be entirely banished in favor of one that portrayed gorillas as sympathetic, lovable, and even more noble than many humans. Cooper’s own later giant ape film *Mighty Joe Young* was created but some sixteen years after *King Kong* and yet exists as an astonishingly different work in its presentation of what gorillas are, how they should be treated, and even what a human/animal relationship—even one between a white woman and a black ape—could be.

The titular ape of this film, Joe Young, is another gigantic Claymation gorilla. His personality and story arc, however, are almost the polar opposite of Kong's. Most noticeably, while the comparisons between Kong and negatively portrayed black humans is blatant throughout *King Kong*, in *Joe Young* virtually any potential connections between Joe and black humans, unfavorable or otherwise, have been largely scrubbed from the film's potential human-animal comparisons. Instead, *Mighty Joe Young* immediately links Joe in a favorable way to those most "tender angels" of the human species, little white girls, by having a child Jill (another young white woman put into close contact with a giant dark ape, but who here acts as Joe's sister, mother, best friend, and most fierce protector) purchase an infant Joe from some passing African hunters (Bernstein 33). Trading toys, beads, and her father's flashlight for the infant and obviously orphaned Joe, Jill calls the tiny gorilla "better than a doll" and clearly finds the baby gorilla (a real one was used for the beginning scene) nothing but delightful (*Joe Young* 00:05:40). Joe is even quick to charm the colonialist figure of Jill's father; this man, who had initially been planning to shoot Joe, next exclaims that he "will not raise a gorilla," and in the very next scene is shown looking indulgently over the infant Joe as he contentedly sucks a bottle (00:08:30). He even remarks, in strikingly fatherly fashion, "How the little fella loves his milk" (00:08:32). The framing of gorillas as inherently harmless, even benign, thus defines *Mighty Joe Young* from the beginning. This is a perception that is only heightened with every scene.

Over shots of the clearly cute and cuddly infant gorilla sleeping while a soft lullaby plays (the accompanying imagery thus directly contradicting his words) Jill's father tells his daughter that while Joe is obviously currently harmless—indeed, while it "seems impossible now"—that "helpless baby will be ten times stronger than any man in the world," and will soon grow into his true character as "a huge, fierce, dangerous gorilla" (00:08:34). It is true that Joe becomes huge—much larger than actual gorillas, although far smaller than his predecessor Kong—yet he becomes fierce and dangerous, as with Akeley's descriptions of the beasts, only when he is being directly menaced or hurt. Indeed, as far as there is a villain in *Mighty Joe Young*, the threats clearly come only from the desire of the greedy to exploit this giant ape, and the disastrous consequences thereof. In *Mighty Joe Young*, Cooper seems to have constructed the film to be more of a scathing criticism of America's entertainment industry rather than a simple exotic adventure story, portraying the willingness of its figureheads to take advantage of innocent animals and innocent humans in a clearly negative light. The primary showman of this film, Max O'Hara, is introduced as a self-interested charlatan willing to do anything to draw crowds to his entertainment venues. A viewer is quickly alerted to this fact when O'Hara jovially describes how, far from being an "objective" reporter on Africa's dangers (as embodied in figures such as Du Chaillu and J.H. Patterson), he had simply created a story of escaping from pygmy cannibals and peddled it as fact, all to draw an audience to his safari. In a showman's bid to create a novel spectacle, O'Hara intentionally combines the aesthetics of the "Wild West" and the African safari by hiring the cowboy/professional roper Gregg Johnson and his team to catch lions for a night club, intending to bring living embodiments of popular "wild" spaces into an enclosed venue where they could be effectively bought and sold. As soon as he lays eyes on Joe, O'Hara commands his cowboy team to also capture the clearly frightened gorilla for the same purpose. The resulting chase and battle—in which a simultaneously angered and terrified Joe attempts to fend off his attackers but never kills or even seriously hurts a soul—ends when a now adult Jill appears on the scene, sporting almost the same dress and hairstyle as her child self, and reveals she has firm control over Joe's actions by commanding him to "drop it!" as Joe lifts a screaming O'Hara up by his feet (00:24:10). She also shows herself to be not just Joe's master but also his

friend and protector by telling Gregg (who was going to shoot Joe) off, and further yells at all the attendant armed men, who she calls a pack of “big bullies,” to get off her land and leave her giant ape be (00:25:00). Later, she pacifies Joe by whistling the same tune that was Joe’s bedtime lullaby and offering him a banana, the “traditional” food of the great apes, as they stroll through Jill’s fields. Rather than being victim and monster, the white woman and the black ape here have a clear fondness for each other, even seeming to platonically desire no company but each other’s.

The trouble truly begins when O’Hara, not to be denied his chance at displaying a giant ape, entices the naïve Jill into bringing Joe to America, where she would get to experience for herself the excitement of “Music, glamor, bright lights, Hollywood” (00:30:00)! Under O’Hara’s direction (and far more successfully than in *King Kong*, thus making the film stand as an example of how perhaps it was only when animals and the “wilderness” they represent became “controlled, subdued, and safe” that they are perceived as being “at last worthy of our benign attention”), Africa as a concept has been made firmly part of American big city entertainment (Hancocks 247). O’Hara’s nightclub, the “Golden Safari,” is adorned with elephant and lion sculptures, and the lions Gregg and his team captured pace restlessly behind thick glass behind a bar. Snide and boorish patrons are let out of their cars by black men dressed in animals skins and feather-bedazzled turbans, while inside they are treated to the sight of black men with painted faces and dressed in feathers and animal hide—and even horns—wildly beating and dancing on tribal-esque drums. Jill and Joe Young themselves are the crowing jewels of this display, with O’Hara revealing his “finds” from the very heart of “darkest Africa” through a performance composed of an elegantly dressed Jill playing Joe’s lullaby on a piano while Joe holds her high above his head, this giant ape’s monstrous strength shown to be fully at the beck and call of U.S. entertainment (*Joe Young* 00:37:40). The fun for Jill and Joe, however, is quick to dissipate. An obviously miserable Joe is locked up in a small cage in between performances, prompting Gregg to call him a “Poor ol’ boy” (00:47:13). An equally miserable Jill—whose life is now nothing but performing and being harassed by reporters and children begging for an autograph—ends up calling herself “stupid” for having agreed to take herself and her simian brother out of their Edenic African home (00:48:35). Joe’s unhappiness even reaches the point where he stops eating (perhaps a fictional reflection of the centuries-old impossibility of keeping gorillas alive for long in the inhospitable conditions they were thrust into in Western countries), which prompts Jill to exclaim that “We’re not going to kill Joe,” reveal her love for Gregg, and the two resolve to quit their jobs in showbusiness and take the gentle giant back to Africa (00:50:40). Their happy ending is delayed, however, by O’Hara. Through a combination of convincing and coercion, he gets Jill and Joe to put on more and more shows of greater and greater humiliation for the pair, even having them play a monkey and organ grinder while a jeering audience throws paper money at Joe while the giant ape cowers, his Claymation face pulled into a mask of pure fear.

In *King Kong*, Kong went on a rampage to fulfill his own monstrous desires. Joe, by direct contrast, only gets aggressive when directly threatened or because of the intentional folly of blatantly selfish, shallow humans. While it is Joe who eventually ends up destroying O’Hara’s “Golden Safari,” *Mighty Joe Young* frames this as having clearly been the fault of three of O’Hara’s patrons, who aren’t satisfied with harassing Joe during his degrading organ grinder performance and hunt him down to his cage. Deciding to show the ape “a good time,” they get Joe drunk on champagne before accusing the ape of drinking “all our good liquor” and burning him with a cigarette (00:55:30, 00:58:53). An inebriated and enraged Joe breaks out of his cage and, chasing after the drunks, sends the entirety of the club’s patronage screaming out the doors while Joe is left to fight escaped lions and, blundering about in drunken confusion, destroys the

club beyond repair. Here again, however, the injustice of civilization makes itself known. For it is not the drunks who are punished for intentionally harassing and inebriating a wild animal, but instead a judge tells Jill that while he is “very sorry,” Joe “must be shot” (01:06:30).

Joe, Jill, and Gregg are offered no sympathy from the law of this “civilized” land. One callous cop assigned to be part of Joe’s firing squad even states that killing Joe—who with his clear desires and “human-like” expressions is framed as much a “person” as his human friends—will be “just like shooting a mad dog” (01:07:50). The audience is furthermore treated to the pathos of a sorrowful Jill and Joe huddled together, Jill lamenting her friend’s unfair and violent fate: “There isn’t anything I could do, Joe. I tried. But they wouldn’t listen. Gregg and I were going to take you back home. It was nice there, wasn’t it? Nobody hated us. Nobody wanted to...kill” (01:07:00). Here, then, the landscape of Africa—portrayed as free from the “taint of civilization”—is presented as the more peaceful, even preferable environment to that of the rapacious, even brutal peoples and landscapes of the urbanized USA (Gott and Weir 176).

Mighty Joe Young—especially its last section, which is characterized by a remorseful O’Hara helping Joe, Jill, and Gregg escape the cops and make a mad dash for a boat to Africa, resulting in a high-speed car chase—is defined by “partly patronizing, partly admiring attitudes toward an exotic that promises alternatives to the dilemma of Western culture” (Lorenz 161). Joe’s drunken rampage cost O’Hara his nightclub and his reputation, yet besides this being framed as not much of a loss due to the clearly reprehensible behavior that his patrons had expressed in almost every scene they were in, O’Hara is also shown to have realized that the destruction was the fault of his own greed and callousness towards the suffering of Jill and Joe, rather than because of the inherently violent nature of the colossal ape. O’Hara concocts a plan to lie to the police so that those he knows he exploited can make their escape to freedom and happiness, and even apologizes to *both* Jill and Joe; he tells the woman that “I talked you into this, and it’s up to me to get you out,” and further tells the ape “I should have left you in Africa where you belong” (*Joe Young* 01:08:30, 01:09:10). Gorillas and the “exotic” nature they represent, in other words, are now being framed as something that deserves to exist unmolested by Western interests.

For all that there is an adherence to many of the tropes of colonial era adventure stories, *Mighty Joe Young* stars a giant ape that even in his rage is not a frightening figure, but rather an obvious victim of human greed who, as such, deserves to be left in peace in his jungle home. Joe is even suddenly shoved into the status of “hero” when in the movie’s climax, and at great risk to his own life (something he seems aware of, given Joe’s Claymation expressions of tangible fear) he helps save three children from a burning orphanage. Joe is badly hurt in the ordeal, but having now definitively proven his worth as a “person,” O’Hara is able to truthfully assure a sobbing Jill that “There ain’t no one in the world who’s gonna shoot Joe now” (01:31:20). And sure enough, the last scene of the film is one of reassurance, with a humbled but still in show business O’Hara receiving a film reel depicting Jill, Gregg, and finally a still alive and apparently thriving Joe waving to the camera while framed in a lush jungle background. O’Hara gives the last spoken words of the film, saying that “they lived happily ever after...I’m sure they will. They’re back home where they belong” (01:33:10). Joe himself, however, appears to have been granted the final actual words of the movie, for the last shot of the film is of a beautiful African landscape before a final card is pulled up that reads “Good-bye from Joe Young” (01:33:12). The giant ape, in other words, is now a hero deserving not only his life, but to be regarded as possessing beneficent human traits.

Given the decidedly negative depictions of gorillas in his previous and most successful film—and that this perception had not changed much in the decade and some since then, as exemplified by both “Allied and Axis propaganda [being] decidedly gorilla-centric between 1939 and 1945, each side in the conflict imagining the other’s aggression as signifying a pre-evolved primitivism”—it can be read as astonishing that Cooper would have taken such a radically different approach to gorillas in his creation of *Mighty Joe Young* (Gott and Weir 170). While *Mighty Joe Young* does in truth stand as but an example of the very beginning of the rapid and momentous shift in perspective towards the great apes, it can also be explained by the historical reality that starting around the 1930s, for the first time in history the American public had access to the sight of actual living gorillas who displayed endearing traits. The much beloved real gorilla Bushman, to give one particularly noteworthy example, was purchased by Lincoln Park Zoo in 1930 (Anderson et al.). He not only attracted massive crowds for his novelty alone as the first gorilla kept in a zoo west of the Potomac River, but his personality and “sense of fun” soon ensured that he was “universally adored”; he was voted by the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums as “the most outstanding and most valuable single animal of its kind in any zoo,” and as “the most famous gorilla in the world” at the time is believed to have been visited by an “estimated 100 million people...over the course of his life” (Life Magazine, “Bushman is Sick”; Anderson et al.). When Bushman “died of a heart illness at the age of 22 on New Year’s Day, 1951,” literally thousands of mourners “brought flowers to his empty exhibit” (Anderson et al.). Clearly, the mere observable existence of this living ape had done much to dispel the vision of gorillas as violent and lecherous brutes. And indeed, the shift displayed from *King Kong* to *Mighty Joe Young* but marks the beginning of the total transformation of gorillas in the Western popular imagination “from nightmarish monster to innocent victim and psychopomp” (Sorenson 69).

In the “shared public discourses” of “mass cinema” in the 21st century, 1933’s *Kong* and 1949’s *Joe* mark a major turning point in how gorillas were portrayed (Stymeist 395). This is a trend that has continued up into the contemporary era, with the demonic ape virtually a thing of the past. In fact, the colossal apes of today’s popular cinema, even if they bear *Kong*’s name, universally possess more in common with the gorilla side of the Young family: in Peter Jackson’s 2005 remake of Cooper’s *King Kong*, the giant gorilla is framed as magnificent rather than frightening, and his relation with Ann Darrow clearly sparks joy in them both all while the ape himself is framed as an obvious victim of the “civilized” world’s mechanized violence as well as of Denham’s greed; in 2017’s *Kong: Skull Island*, the giant ape, besides also going out of his way to save the blonde woman of this film from all manner of hungry critters, has been reworked into a savagely noble and gargantuan protector for the island’s indigenous human population, who depend on this *Kong* to keep lethal, gigantic, lizard-like monsters called Skullcrawlers from devouring them; the titan-sized albino gorilla George of 2018’s *Rampage* ends up serving a quadruple role as an obvious victim of human greed due to his family being gunned down by poachers when he was an infant, a clear victim of two CEOs’ catastrophic avarice, a jovial companion to the wildlife researcher Davis, and finally a protector for humanity when he battles and wins against the destructive mutated wolf Frank and even more destructive mutated alligator Lizzie; and in 2021’s *Godzilla vs. Kong*, the gigantic ape has not only learned sign language and repeatedly expresses his desire for “home,” but has also become the personal protector of a deaf girl, the last of *Skull Island*’s human tribe. The two share a special bond (along with all the pathos that the giant protector/tiny protectee dynamic is meant to inspire), and *Kong* saves humanity from its own destructive enterprises when he decapitates the robot

monstrosity Mechagodzilla, which had just finished murdering its own creator before moving on to the surrounding city. If these contemporary versions of the giant ape figure are any indication, it is not just that a near century-long effort has been made to decouple giant fictional apes from their original racialized roots, but that the perception of gorillas as inherently violent, bloodthirsty, and lascivious has been all but relegated to the past. There has been a totalizing transformation, in other words, of the cultural image of gorillas from that of murderous brutes to be killed and exploited with impunity to remarkable, funny, tragic, human-like creatures that should be protected. This transformation of the image of apes, while making its first serious trends in the shift in tone from Cooper's *King Kong* to *Mighty Joe Young*, would truly and significantly develop thanks to the data collection and emotionally charged written works considered in the next section of this chapter. For unlike the entirely fictional black ape/white women pairings of decades past, the narratives that primatologists Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey crafted from their own experiences of closely interacting with nonhuman apes were created not with the goal of entertaining, but for the dual purpose of educating a larger world on how the animals themselves behaved in their natural habitats, and to save them from a rapidly encroaching extinction. In doing so, these women changed the conversation on primates, nature, and humanity's place in the world forever.

Section Two: Primate Narratives and Monkey Girls

As products of the silver screen, the films *King Kong* and *Mighty Joe Young* were primarily created for entertainment purposes. And as works designed to speak to a wide audience, they stand as noteworthy expressions of two influential aspects of ape-centered animal narratives: both the longevity (and consequences) of the “violent beast” framing of gorilla “nature”; and how quickly common Western perceptions of actual apes began to shift in the second half of the 20th century. That the reimagining of the amorphous “ape” into a gentle animal giant—and even a generally benign “human-like” creature—coincides with successful, years-long displays of living gorillas and chimpanzees in zoos around the Western world is no coincidence. This lengthy presentation of animate anthropoid creatures with clear personalities allowed, for the first time in recorded history, for many to see the great apes more as material, even individualized animals than as sensational, frightening fictions. While their work is thus undoubtedly of import, the subjects of this section—primatologists Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey—in many senses but set this perspective shift into overdrive when they completed what would become some of the most historically, culturally, and even biologically important field studies in ethology ever managed. In the early 1960s, both women had been provided the initial funding and opportunity to spend years observing groups of the Eastern chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes schweinfurthi*) and mountain gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla beringei*) in their natural habitats by the acclaimed paleoanthropologist Louis Leakey. That their studies and the subsequent publications of their conclusions—Jane Goodall's *In the Shadow of Man* (1971) and Dian Fossey's *Gorillas in the Mist* (1983)—which framed the primates through an explicitly sympathetic lens, led to significant outcomes is unquestionable. The start of the 20th century (as exemplified before by the hunting narrative of the prominent taxidermist and hunter Carl J. Akeley) saw many convinced that gorillas and most other African animals were inevitably doomed to extinction. Yet in early 2021, the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund announced that the year 2020 witnessed the still critically endangered Mountain gorilla experience a baby boom. In fact,

their population—which in Akeley’s time was estimated to have been “only fifty, maybe 100, individuals”—has of 2021 since grown to 1,063 known apes (Newman 62; Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund). That these critically endangered animals, along with the other subspecies of gorillas and chimpanzees, ever experienced this rise in population (or even survived into the 21st century) is in great part due to Fossey’s and Goodall’s studies and lifelong endeavors to keep a variety of threats from sending our closest animal kin into the abyss of extinction. For through studying the animals for years in the wild “with a respectful attitude”—as well as a willingness to anthropomorphize—Goodall and Fossey both “uncovered chimpanzees’ and gorillas’ abilities that previously had been considered exclusively human,” as well as crafted widely and wildly popular narratives about these apes that framed them as human-like individuals (Lorenz 166). What their studies did, in other words, was utilize the “objectivity” understood to define scientific observation as a means by which to present these animals as “human” enough to deserve our sympathy, understanding, and love.

The focus of *In the Shadow of Man* and *Gorillas in the Mist* is on the individualities, relationships, and personalities of these animals. And yet—following the trend of many animal narratives in being defined by dichotomous portrayals of animal life—it must be noted that both pieces are rife with anecdotes and observations of ape violence that would have scandalized even the early explorers. Such acts of simian brutality are often presented as even more terrible for being perpetuated by individualized primates that both authors clearly love. For Goodall, her initial observations of ape violence came with the “tremendously exciting” discovery that chimpanzees—in what would be a series of observations that shattered the image of these apes as peaceable vegetarians—not only ate meat “but hunted for it as well” (Goodall, *Shadow*, 34). A resulting complex mix of respect and fear in both Goodall and other human witnesses for these animals is on clear display; Goodall both admires the hunting chimps for their “remarkable cooperation” as well as provides lurid descriptions of how such hunters, after having successfully captured a red colobus monkey, “screaming and barking in excitement, tore their victim into several pieces” (196, 70). Chimpanzees have now been observed killing and eating a wide variety of creatures, with smaller primates seeming to be one of their favorite types of flesh. There are even “two cases on record of chimpanzees in the area actually taking...African babies—presumably as prey, since when recovered from an adult male chimpanzee one infant had had its limbs partially eaten” (195). Goodall does attempt to mitigate any horror and hatred for the apes her account may spark. She states that besides humans existing as but “only another kind of primate” so far as “the chimpanzee is concerned,” if a human finds a chimpanzee killing and devouring human infants disturbing they should find it “equally horrifying...that in a great many places throughout their range chimpanzees are considered a delicacy by humans” (196). One cannot, however, be but chilled by Goodall’s statement that she and her then-husband Hugo had in 1971 been unable to “spend too much time at the Gombe because we have a child [nicknamed Grub] of our own”; chimpanzees, after all, “did not see Grub as my precious baby—merely as a tempting meal” (253, 254).

Since Goodall’s studies of the Gombe chimpanzees began, observations on chimpanzee violence have but accumulated. As Goodall herself writes, “I never could have imagined, when first I knew the chimps, the series of brutal attacks made by males of one social group against the individuals of a smaller neighboring community: attacks that led to the deaths of the victims, male and female alike” (265). Nor are these now well documented cases of chimpanzees engaging in a kind of proto-warfare the only case of ape-on-ape viciousness and resultant human abhorrence. A more individualized series of tragedies befalling a male chimpanzee named Mr.

McGregor—which began with him being crippled from the waist down due to a polio epidemic and ended with him being mercy killed by Goodall’s team—even prompted Goodall to write that the brutality and indifference he received from his fellow chimps made her come “nearer to *hating* a chimpanzee than I have ever been before or since” (218, italics mine). While one would then perhaps be tempted to assume that the search for a peaceable kingdom could be found in our other close kin, those “gentle giants” the gorillas, Dian Fossey’s work likewise does much to complicate this Edenic image. To be sure, as Fossey first noted and which has been repeatedly confirmed since then, silverback gorillas (the mature males and social centers around which gorilla families are organized) will go to extreme lengths “in order to avoid physical clashes” (Fossey 69). In April 1973, however, Fossey was introduced to “infanticide among the Visoke gorillas” when she discovered a “baby’s broken body” (70). The dead infant, which Fossey had named Curry and which was only ten months old at time of death, was found to have “ten bite wounds of varying severity” which appear to have caused the infant significant pain and distress before death; as Fossey records it, during “the course of measuring and photographing the remains, I found Curry’s fingernail impressions remained as pink indentations in the palms of both hands” (70). Fossey was left “deeply saddened by Curry’s unexpected death” (71). In a shocking and direct contrast, Fossey soon came to understand that not only do gorilla mothers generally show little to no signs of distress after losing their young to infanticide, but that infanticide, as a good reproductive strategy for silverbacks, is a relatively common occurrence among the species. While gorillas have never been observed following infanticide with cannibalism as with chimpanzees—and while this is far from the only danger that wild gorillas face—the tendency to infanticide is one that Fossey portrays as particularly upsetting. She even writes that she had “found myself strongly disliking” the young silverback Beetsme because his “discord” resulted in the death of the infant Frito after that infant’s father, the silverback Uncle Bert, had been killed by poachers (219). While Fossey also does much to mitigate any negative emotion the actions of these animals may stir within a human, here again is an explicit acknowledgement of the fear, dislike, and even hatred that the observable violence of our closest animal relatives may stir in a human mind.

Although both Fossey and Goodall have been accused of over-anthropomorphization and of encouraging a purely Eden-like imagining of the great ape’s habitats and lives, their narratives also lend much basis to the perception that gorillas and chimps are violent creatures with little to no regard for even their peers. Goodall explicitly writes that chimpanzees “usually show a lack of considerations for each other’s feelings which in some ways may represent the deepest part of the gulf between them and us” (*Shadow* 191). Fossey’s account—besides the aforementioned infanticide—likewise contains lengthy anecdotes on not only the terrible wounds silverbacks inflict on each other, but on gorillas’ displays of “xenophobic brutality” (Fossey 227). Fossey intimately experienced an instance of this when she tried to reintroduce a rescued orphaned gorilla infant named Bonne Année into one of the habituated troops. This “baby” had reportedly been very eager to rejoin her kind with a rapidity that left Fossey, in one of many examples of her efforts to “mother” the apes, reaching for her “almost as instinctively as a mother reaches out to protect her child from danger” (225). Such were the emotions involved that this event, in fact, “dissolved” Fossey’s “intentions to remain a detached scientific observer” (225). For all of Bonne Année’s eagerness, her first attempt to rejoin her kind resulted in horror when two females and a young male, Effie, Tuck, and Icarus, began assaulting the infant so viciously that to Fossey it had seemed “as if they wanted to extend [Bonne Année’s] suffering as long as possible for their own sport” (226). “I do not recall,” Fossey writes, “ever feeling so helpless”

(227). While Bonne Année later successfully joined a troop whose “lack of strong kinship bonds permitted instant acceptance of the baby,” it had taken twenty days for her to recover from the merciless treatment she had suffered at the hands of her conspecifics (228). The violence of the great apes, as both *In the Shadow of Man* and *Gorillas in the Mist* present it, is undeniable.

There is a vast menagerie of animal life that has been significantly influenced by fictionalized animal narratives. The great apes stand as one of the most explicit illustrations of this inclination. This is demonstrable through both overarching sociological trends as well as the personal anecdotes of individuals who played an important hand in shaping the fates of the great apes. To provide but a few examples, Akeley (as noted before) was significantly influenced by the sensationalized accounts of Paul Belloni Du Chaillu, and Goodall has written that her love of Africa and its animals originated in, among other fictions, “the Doctor Dolittle books and the Tarzan books...and many volumes about the adventures of the early explorers in ‘Darkest Africa’” (*Shadow* xi). Yet while Goodall and Fossey’s studies stand as but the first to have provided conclusive evidence on the violent behavior of the great apes, they also stand as the end of the domination of the “brute ape” perception. In the case of the gorilla, as professor of environmental relationships James L. Newman noted, the animal narratives driving numerous gorilla hunts in the 19th and early 20th centuries were primarily “*myths* about the fierceness of gorillas” towards humans that had simultaneously fueled “their image as savage beasts and, by extension, the bravery of those who hunted them” (8, italics mine). In following this mythologization—and in line with the widespread endeavors of colonialism—most of the “science” applied to these apes consisted of expeditions to shoot the beasts to procure their bodies for museums and personal collections. Up until the late 20th century, in other words, the interactions between man and ape were almost always violent by design. That Louis Leakey had intended to set a branch of primatology against this trend is indicated in the way that Goodall describes his underlying reasons in choosing her, Fossey, and later Birtué Galdikas (who studies orangutans) as the potential faces for great ape observation. Goodall does write that Leakey had expressed frustration with the fact that up until the 1960s only one man, Professor Henry W. Nissen, “had attempted to make a serious study of chimpanzee behavior in the wild” (*Shadow* 5). This single study had furthermore only lasted for two and a half months, even though “two years would scarcely be long enough” (5). Equally significant, however, is her notation that Leakey had chosen his then-young women observers under the belief “that a university training was unnecessary,” and “even that in some ways it might have been disadvantageous. He wanted someone with a mind uncluttered and unbiased by theory who would make the study for no other reason than a real desire for knowledge; and, in addition, someone with a *sympathetic* understanding of animals” (6, italics mine). In other words, Goodall, Fossey, and Galdikas were chosen as observers not only due to their tenacity and genuine desire to understand “wild” apes in their habitats, but because—in contrast to the common lines of thought that portrayed the apes as violent *things*—these women were more likely to approach the animals as if they were more akin to *people*. Leakey, in fact, had decided that Goodall’s studies were necessary because “it was possible that an understanding of chimpanzee behavior today might shed light on the behavior of our stone age ancestors” (6). Far from being perceived as vicious creatures distinctly separate from humans, the underlying assumptions of Goodall’s studies framed chimpanzees as potentially so human-like that through them we could develop a more complete comprehension of ourselves.

While Leakey had apparently “preferred female researchers for primates, thinking them more patient and less threatening than men,” both Fossey’s and Goodall’s accounts also stand in

many ways as late 20th-century continuations of Akeley's attempts to criticize and offer alternatives to the stories of inherently violent apes created by "sensational writers" who "exaggerate their dangers for commercial reasons" (Newman 96; Osborn xi). As such, in both *Under the Shadow of Man* and *Gorillas in the Mist*—with both works acting as examples of a type of narrative conglomerate that is both adventure story, science writing, and conservation tale—Fossey and Goodall are careful to make distinctions between the then-common imagery of apes and what behaviors they witnessed for themselves. Yet their most influential contribution to this rewriting of perceptions of the great apes is in their insistence on framing the animals as individuals, a decision made manifest in them naming, rather than numbering, the animal subjects of their research. Goodall defends this decision by stating she had "always been interested in the *differences* between individuals, and a name is not only more individual than a number but also far easier to remember" (*Shadow* 32). It is a framing tactic and an observation practice that would permit both women to prove to a wider world just how "human"—that is, just how valuable—these animals are.

In taking the time to habituate chimps and gorillas to their presence, spending years observing them as they went about the lives, and thinking of them as individuals from the first, Fossey and Goodall discovered many aspects of these creatures that in previous decades were all but unimaginable. That this decision is one of the defining aspects of Goodall's work is observable early on. The chimpanzee Mr. McGregor, for example, is described as having been "somewhat belligerent," enough to remind Goodall "of Beatrix Potter's old gardener in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*" (32). David Graybeard, who "was less afraid of me from the start than were any of the other chimps," is often presented as an "extra calm" creature who even allowed Goodall a "gift to treasure" when he "actually allowed me to groom him for at least a minute" (33, 74). William is "timid," old Flo "as tough as nails," and Passion—who along with her adolescent daughter Pom would later conduct a campaign of infanticidal cannibalism on the Gombe Stream chimpanzees—is described as "a somewhat unnatural mother" (69, 79, 146). In addition to these notes on individual chimpanzee characters, Goodall spends many pages expounding on one of her most well-known discoveries—which along with further observations of similar behaviors would seem to definitively prove the "humanness" of the great apes—that chimpanzees use tools. Goodall first observed this "human" characteristic among the apes when the chimps David Greybeard and his close ally Goliath were seen not only using sticks to "fish" for termites straight from their mound, but also to have "picked small leafy twigs and prepared them for use by stripping off the leaves. This was the first recorded example of a wild animal not merely *using* an object as a tool, but actually modifying an object and thus showing the crude beginnings of *toolmaking*" (36). Goodall and her team would observe numerous other examples of tool use, including: using "leaves to sop up water they cannot reach with their lips—and first they chew on the leaves and thus increase their absorbency"; using "handfuls of leaves to wipe dirt from their bodies or to dab at wounds"; and using "sticks as levers to enlarge underground bees' nests" (235). In the decades since then, chimpanzees have also been observed to "sequentially [use] two different types of tools to access army ants," use "wooden and stone hammers against rocky outcrops and exposed tree roots to open seedpods and five species of hard nuts," and even use "stones to crack oil-palm nuts on stone anvils" (Tuttle 338, 339). Back in the 1970s, this discovery was so exciting and potentially world-changing that, upon being informed of it through telegram, Leakey "cabled back to Jane the memorable response 'Now we must redefine 'tool,' redefine 'man,' or accept chimpanzees as humans'" (qtd. Peterson 212). The scientific world had, as the astonishing words of this telegram make clear, received evidence that made "the

sharp line dividing ‘us’ [humans] from ‘them’ [animals]” seem far more porous than before believed possible (Goodall, *Shadow*, xvii). This is a porousness that has furthermore garnered more and more evidence, as Goodall emphasized in her 2010 preface to *In the Shadow of Man* when she wrote that the research and observations completed in the years after her own study but made it “increasingly clear that we are part of, and not separated from, the rest of the animal kingdom...differences are of degree rather than kind”(xvii).

While Goodall presents the value of her research subjects as obvious in both their personalities and “human-like” achievements, Fossey’s *Gorillas in the Mist*, which as with *In the Shadow of Man* “combines elements of a field diary, an autobiography, and a travelogue,” puts emphasis on what Fossey would frame as the generally benign personalities of these affable apes (Lubrich and Liebal 50). For while Fossey spends pages on describing the violence of gorillas, she begins her work by stating that her “studies of this majestic and dignified great ape—a gentle yet maligned nonhuman primate—have provided insight to the essentially harmonious means” by which gorillas live (Fossey xv). As with Goodall, Fossey spends a major portion of her book’s pages describing the different looks and personalities of the animals she observed. Icarus, for example, she met as a “young juvenile who treed to chestbeat and flamboyantly swing through the branches before leaping with a crash into the foliage below,” an action that instantly earned him his name and would prove to serve him well, given how often afterwards his “insatiable curiosity and boldness...prompted risky displays” (60, 61). His mother Liza, presented as “a good-natured, responsive mother who seemed to enjoy the antics of the little wind-up toy she had brought into the world,” is also described in phrases usually reserved for humans (74). The gorilla infant Muraha is likewise portrayed in positive terms as “a fluffy, chuckling, playful ball of vitality” whose mother Pansy, “with a broad smile, often dangled the baby over her head until both mother and daughter were chuckling, a sound much like human giggling” (94). Even the fully mature silverback Beethoven is depicted as behaving “as mischievously as a puppy off its leash,” going out of his way to startle Fossey for fun, “all the while wearing a roguish facial expression” (84). Yet lest these creatures be taken as the animal equivalent of clowns, Fossey’s account of their lives is also filled with more frightening stories that nevertheless display their “human-like” characters. This is clear in Fossey’s recording of when the gorilla mother Effie, “wearing a horrified expression of fear similar to that of a human parent whose child is in mortal danger,” sees that her infant Poppy had fallen while playing and was left “hanging [almost fatally] by her neck in a narrow fork” of a tree (88). As with the more humorous stories—and while Fossey describes this “unique observation” as providing but one example of “the strong maternal inclinations of female gorillas”—it also stands as another indicator of her attempts to describe these nonhuman creatures in human terms (89). In providing a sweet description of the massive silverback Beethoven gently interacting with his “exuberant” six-month-old son Puck even while “Puck was nearly obscured from sight by the massive hand,” Fossey makes her intention to redeem the image of the “monstrous” gorilla particularly clear (64). For noting that this “observation of a silverback sire with his offspring was typical of similar scenes throughout the years to be spent with the gorillas,” Fossey concludes in triumph that the consistently observed “extraordinary gentleness of the adult male with his young dispels all the King Kong mythology” (64).

Both primatologists are clearly interested in presenting how, in the process of watching the specific members of their study species, they “became increasingly aware of [the animals] as individual beings” (Goodall, *Shadow*, 98). Fossey and Goodall also both work to explain why they had taken the months necessary to habituate the apes to their presence by defining

themselves as “the bluejeaned creature” and “a strange white ape” respectively, with Fossey being especially adamant that any human observer “is an intruder in the domain of a wild animal and must remember that the rights of that animal supersede human interests” (Fossey 11; Goodall, *Shadow*, 263; Fossey 14). While it may seem sentimental and overly anthropomorphic, this observation technique not only allowed Goodall and Fossey to spend months on end in the very midst of great ape groups, but also resulted in the habituated animals expressing the behaviors they would if there was no human observer—which they initially regarded as a potentially dangerous unknown—around. That the earlier antagonistic human-ape relationships gave “evidence” to a radically different kind of creature than how these apes typically behave is inherent in both these primatologist’s accounts, something that Fossey’s writing emphasizes. This is no more clear than when she writes that while popular literature “generally describes roars, screams, or *wraaghs* as the main components of the gorilla vocabulary”—and that these were indeed “the most frequent sounds I heard from the as yet unhabituated gorillas whenever my presence posed an element of threat to them”—it was “most rewarding” when “the high frequency of alarm calls was slowly replaced by undisturbed intragroup vocalizations” (Fossey 54). She even eventually, and joyfully, experienced for herself the “extraordinary feeling” of being able “to sit in the middle of a resting group of gorillas and contribute to a contented chorus of belch vocalizers” (54). Far from the image of violent beasts that would strangle a human at first sight—and while stories of ape violence run throughout both texts—the representations that Goodall and Fossey crafted for and from their ape observation is framed at numerous instances as something approaching a kind of multi-species Eden. At the very least, any reader would feel hard pressed to define these ape subjects as anything but “amazing individuals” (11).

In my previous examination of Carl Akeley’s *In Brightest Africa*, I noted that for all that Akeley did to save gorillas from eradication—without his efforts to create the Virunga National Park, the mountain gorilla would likely have been driven out of existence long before Fossey undertook her consequential studies—he died believing that gorillas, as “easy and highly prized prey to the ‘sporting’ instinct,” were on the “way to extinction” (248). And while he was by no means the first or the last individuals to express fear of the potential final demise of the great apes, this fear is brought to a fever pitch throughout *In the Shadow of Man* and *Gorillas in the Mist*. Fossey—who was the more aggressive of the two primatologists—left behind a difficult legacy of conservation, one that saw her “frequently calling Africans ‘Wogs’” (in “truth, she really didn’t like them”), kidnapping children to get leverage over their poacher parents, and finally meeting her demise when after decades of wrecking poaching operations she was “found dead in her cabin, two panga blows to the head having done the job” (Newman 99, 101). Yet the benefit of her actions to mountain gorillas cannot be understated. Though their population is now over 1,000 known apes, when Fossey first undertook her studies there were but “about 240 mountain gorillas” and “only some 4000 gorillas (including all three subspecies) now liv[ing] in reputedly protected areas” (Fossey xvi, xvii). With such a low population, Fossey seems correct to fear that poaching and the destruction and development of gorilla habitat would lead to a situation in which “the mountain gorilla [would become] one of the seven or so other rare species both discovered and extinct within the same century” (20). The danger of this happening is a point she hammers in time and time again, especially through her pages-long documentation of the tragic ends of a multitude of gorillas. Reminding her readers relatively early in the text that it “takes only one trap, one bullet to kill a gorilla,” Fossey details the fates of such individualized animals as Coco and Pucker, two gorilla infants orphaned by poachers who Fossey had striven to nurse back from very poor health before she was forced to hand them over to the park’s

Rwandese Conservator, who had had them “procured” for the Cologne Zoo in exchange for a Land Rover “and an unspecified amount of money for conservation work in the Parc des Volcans” (58, 106). According to Fossey’s account, one of these gorillas has “shed actual tears” from the pain of her plight, and after being threatened with the destruction of more gorilla families if she didn’t hand over the infants for the zoo, Fossey was left feeling “like a traitor” to the infant apes (110, 122). Fossey writes that she was so overcome by grief and guilt over the fate of these young gorillas that she could not bear to watch them being taken away, instead running “deep into the forest until I could run no more. There is no way to describe the pain of their loss, even now, more than a decade later” (124). Though she spends numerous other sections of *Gorillas in the Mist* elaborating on other facets of gorilla conservation and tragedy—with the most well-known case being that of the widely publicized fate of Digit, a young silverback killed by poachers and who Fossey had particularly loved—the kind of agony seen as characterizing that of a mother/child separation is explicitly present in this anecdote, creating a strong argument for the necessity of gorilla conservation on storytelling alone.

In The Shadow of Man does not contain any emotionally fraught instance of Goodall having to witness the butchered remains of a cherished chimpanzee. Yet her love for chimpanzees and fears of what violent human-driven fates may ultimately befall them is likewise a central characteristic of her book. Goodall makes her worries known not only through descriptions of the plight of the Gombe chimpanzees (the land around these animals has been so over-developed that they have been left “virtually imprisoned in their tiny (thirty-five-square-kilometer) park”) but that this is a trend hurting humans too, who must now contend with a landscape that has not only “been cleared of trees,” but one in which “the soil has lost its fertility, and there has been terrible erosion” (*Shadow* xviii). Goodall does state that it is “only man, with his superior brain, his superior intellect [who] casts his shadow of doom over the freedom of the chimpanzee in the forests with his guns and his spreading settlements and cultivation” (3). The resultant eco-social situation, however, is one in which *both* African human and African ape “are struggling to survive” (xviii). Yet as with Fossey—and while both women repeatedly stress the absolute necessity of wealthy countries supporting African communities for conservation to work, as well as noting, “God forgive us,” that at the time “chimpanzee infants are in great demand by the medical research laboratories of Europe and the United States”—it is African humans who come off looking far worse than African apes in both narratives (248). Goodall even ends her account with a nightmare, one so terrible that it made her wake “in a cold sweat” and left her unable to sleep again (248). In it, she “watched, unable to move,” as a “grinning human mask approached, white teeth gleaming in ebony face” to murder the old mother chimpanzee Flo and snatch her “screaming” infant Flint into a “dank, evil-smelling sack,” within which “even in the darkness I could see the black shadow of the man” (248). While Goodall is consistent in noting the complex and often exploitative trade relations maintained between Africa and Western powers, it is still primarily the black African—having been separated from the now benign great apes in the Western imagination—who is made the “face” of violent human-caused chimpanzee death.

In its historical context, much of the anthropomorphization that Goodall and Fossey helped pioneer seems an understandable reaction to the then-commonplace demonization and thing-ification that came before. Goodall’s later perspective on the situation is worth quoting in full. As she writes in the 2010 preface to *In the Shadow of Man*, when she was:

...admitted to Cambridge University in 1961, I had been told that it was inappropriate to talk of chimpanzees having personalities, minds capable of thought, or emotions similar

to those we call happiness, sadness, anger, despair, and so on. All these were attributable to the human animal only. In other words, there was a sharp line dividing ‘us’ from ‘them.’ By the time *Shadow* was published, at least some scientists had begun to think differently. There had been other field studies of animals with complex societies—chimpanzees in various parts of Africa, gorillas, baboons, elephants, and so on. And the accumulation of these careful observations was forcing science to rethink its attitude towards other-than-human animals. It became increasingly clear that we are part of, and not separated from, the rest of the animal kingdom (xvii).

While their studies may have successfully convinced many that humans are assuredly a member of the animal world, both primatologists also dedicated their writing to communicate to as wide an audience as they could that though they are most definitely not human, it is beyond a shadow of a doubt that their beloved apes are magnificent, lovable, and worthwhile people. And having successfully convinced the world at large of this perception of the great apes, as a result massive quantities of time, energy, money, and indeed story telling have now for decades been put into ensuring that these animals are protected from a variety of depredations. Both Goodall and Fossey explicitly crafted their accounts to contradict the older, equally “objective” visions of the great apes that presented them as violent, lascivious monsters. As has been confirmed by numerous scientists since their initial observations, Goodall and Fossey’s descriptions of their chosen apes were far from flights of fancy. As summarized by paleoanthropologist Russell Tuttle, these are creatures that—in the 21st century and after decades of research, observation, and lab-controlled testing—are known to unquestionably “feel, fear, and think” and possess “adaptive complexes and novel capabilities” (601). And even while heated debates on how “human” these apes are continue to rage, Goodall and Fossey’s narrative decisions continue to profoundly shape common understandings of what these creatures are. In overtaking the centuries-old vision of the monstrous ape, their presentations of the great apes changed the common Western perception of these animals, with both beneficial and detrimental consequences, forever. Where the uncertainty now primarily lies is in concern to if such “provable” humanness will keep our own species from driving our closest animal kin to extinction.

*Section Three: Melancholy in the Monkey House: Resignation, Conservation, and Survival
Commodification in Karen Joy Fowler’s We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves (2013)*

While the 21st century has ushered in ever-more science-based “permission” to anthropomorphize animal life, doing so is still often associated with child-like naivete and even dangerously consequential ignorance. This is, in many contexts, for good reason. As noted by such figures as Donna Haraway—who stated that perceiving an animal as “a furry child” consistently results in pain for humans and nonhumans both—the annals of history are scarred with examples of multispecies agony and death resulting from insisting on the “humanness” of beloved beasts (*Manifesto* 37). The stories of great apes stand as particularly pronounced cases of this frequently lethal trend. Even so, as significantly demonstrated by the results of Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey’s research, there is no denying that the attribution of “human” traits to nonhuman primates has not only been repeatedly supported through verified observations but has also been wielded successfully in ongoing efforts to keep numerous primate species from plummeting into extinction. In regard to the chimpanzee (which of all the great apes is the

closest to humans, differing genetically from our own species by “only 1.23%”) it is now acceptable in even most scientific circles to define them as “remarkably similar to humans” (Matsuzawa 1). Their capacity “to communicate with each other and with humans” has in particular “held great popular fascination for many years,” with this ability often being upheld as the most important proof of their “humanness,” and even our “animality” (de Luce and Wilder 1). The very fact that modern “research on the evolution of language builds, in part, upon studies conducted by comparative psychologists who attempted to teach captive apes artificial or natural human language”—that these studies “are of major historical significance to the fields of comparative psychology, cognitive psychology, child development, and primatology”—further cements the porousness of the human-animal boundary (Krause & Beran 2). Yet even this seemingly closest of human-animal relationalities, that between ourselves and our “cousins” the chimpanzees, would come to be tested to the point of breaking in these same series of experiments that treated these creatures as simultaneously chimp, child, and, above all else, commodity.

It was the fascination with (and profitability of) chimpanzee “humanness” that in the middle to late twentieth century—and continuing into the 21st, albeit with much less attention and resources—which encouraged the perpetuation of multiple experiments designed around the hypothesis that “perhaps by training nonhuman animals in the use of human languages we will be better able to understand cognitive and intellectual capacities in both humans and nonhumans” (de Luce and Wilder 1). To test this hypothesis, a multitude of chimpanzee infants were bought and brought into North American homes to act as members of a “nuclear family,” a dynamic that often saw them described as the “sons” and “daughters” of their handling researchers. One offset of this “new” understanding of humanness, however, was that “humanity” was a trait that could be measured. Another consequence was the conclusion that even chimpanzees, the animals closest to ourselves, never quite “measured up.” It is thus that I find an analysis of Karen Joy Fowler’s *We Are All Completely Besides Ourselves*—a fiction based on the humanization of the great apes during the heyday of the ape language studies and the objectification of these creatures that frequently followed right after—a fitting conclusion for this chapter on Melancholy Conservation. This novel follows the story of Rosemary Cooke, a woman intimately entangled from birth in the mechanisms through which the ape language studies and the “nuclear family” social structure reproduce the existence of animal life as capital. As part of a family-run and university-funded research project, she was raised from infancy until she was five as the “sister” of a chimpanzee dubbed Fern. This project, although initially profitable, came to an abrupt conclusion when Fern’s increasingly “beastly” behavior prompts her and Rosemary’s researcher-father to end it. While his intentions are good and likely did prevent serious human injury, the results are disastrous: Fern, a sensitive creature who had for years been treated as if she were akin to a human child, is sold to a lab, kept in a small cage, and used as “breeding stock” for both research facilities and zoos; Rosemary, traumatized by the sudden disappearance of an intelligent being she considered her sister, becomes anxious and timid, terrified that she too would be “given away” (Fowler 37). Helpless against the structure in which she and Fern have been placed, she represses (to the best of her abilities) all memory of her nonhuman “sibling.” Rosemary’s mother sinks into depression, her father into alcoholism, and her brother Lowell into a life of animal rights crime for which he is later indefinitely imprisoned. Rosemary, her family, and especially Fern thus stand at a strange halfway point between many definitions of “the human” and “the animal,” with each of them failing to meet the criteria of both; this researcher-father fails to protect any of his children from pain and

imprisonment, this mother sorrows over one (nonhuman) child while neglecting her “true” offspring, Lowell likewise abandons one of his sisters and any chance at a life of normalcy in pursuit of the other, Rosemary is relentlessly teased as a “monkey girl” for her simian behavior and reaches menopause without producing another generation, and Fern, of course, as a chimpanzee never had a chance of being a “real girl” at all. Yet it is in Rosemary’s frequently sardonic descriptions of the ways her family attempts and fails to be “human” (as well as the consequences of this failure) that *We Are Completely Beside Ourselves* reveals itself to be shot through with a terrifying suggestion; that animal existence, including “human-like” creatures and humans themselves, are all embedded in a framework in which we are all ultimately considered potential capital to be exploited, imprisoned, or cast aside. For here even chimpanzees—our closest, most “human,” animal relations—are used to prop up biocapitalist enterprises in two ways: first by “naturalizing” (that is, making inevitable) humanity’s most selfish and violent impulses; and secondly by failing at the language experiments, thus “proving” the inherent “inferiority,” and therefore exploitability, of *all* animal life. As for humans themselves, the fates of the Cooke family stand as testament to how easily one can slip from the “human” pedestal. From child to chimp, we are all so entangled in the capitalist web, this novel thus suggests, that no matter our actions, ideals, or “human” status, there is little to no hope of escape.

Because *We Are All Completely Besides Ourselves* mirrors the often-harsh realities of the historical great ape language studies, I feel it warranted to include the overview of these experiments that psychologists Mark A. Krause and Michael J. Beran provide:

Early research involving chimpanzee and child comparisons inspired subsequent attempts to teach human language systems to apes. Nadia Kohts published detailed behavioral comparisons of the chimpanzee Joni with her son Roody [around 1935]. Winthrop and Luella Kellogg raised the chimpanzee Gua alongside their son Donald for 9 months, and, like Kohts, described behavioral similarities and differences between the two [around 1933]. The Kelloggs described some aspects of the development of communication in both Gua and Donald, though they noted that Gua expressed herself via a ‘language of action.’ Particularly noteworthy was the Kellogg’s detailed recording of Gua’s comprehension of spoken words. Inspired by this early work, and motivated to improve on methodology, Keith and Catherine Hayes [around 1951] raised the chimpanzee Viki in a home environment and treated her as much like a human child as possible, and explicitly focused on teaching her to use spoken English. Although Viki demonstrated impressive capacities for problem solving, number perception, and concept learning, teaching her to speak proved challenging...By the time Hayes and Nissen published [their findings in 1956], Allen and Beatrice Gardner had already begun Project Washoe, which [in 1969] was the first formal attempt to teach American Sign Language (ASL) to a chimpanzee. Herb Terrace subsequently conducted a sign language study with the chimpanzee Nim [in 1979]. Other species of apes were trained to sign, including two gorillas [around 1978 and 2002] and an orangutan [around 1990]...Ape language research extended in new directions with investigators opting for artificial languages that consisted of similar core features of natural languages, while offering several key advantages...For example, Premack [around 1971] taught the chimpanzee Sarah a symbolic system of communication consisting of plastic tokens that she could arrange to communicate. Chimpanzees and bonobos at the Language Research Center at Georgia State University were trained to use a symbolic language consisting of lexigrams [key studies in 1977, 1986, and 1993] (2).

The frequency of these studies, and their common insistence on attempting to teach chimpanzees to communicate exactly as humans do, all speak to the obsessive fascination with determining precisely how we and the great apes are similar and (perhaps more importantly) how we differ. It was during the era of intensive experimentation into the language capabilities of chimpanzees that Fowler sets the beginning of her story. Fern, “born in Africa, where, barely a month later, her mother was killed and sold as food,” is introduced into the Cooke family as their new “daughter” (Fowler 285). In this, Fern very much resembles the (in)famous Washoe, who was “wild caught by the United States Air Force” and “slated to be a part of their space program” before the Gardners “cross-fostered Washoe, meaning that she was reared, to the extent possible, much like a human child growing up in a western middle-class home from the time she arrived at the University of Nevada at Reno” (Krause and Beran 3). And as with the other chimpanzees who lived among western middle-class individuals, Fern, despite the expense, was in her infancy treated as if she were indeed a human child. She not only wore clothes and ate at a table with the rest of the Cookes, but was also raised side by side with Rosemary as her surrogate twin sister with whom she shared almost everything. Rosemary remembers this relationship as one of multispecies bliss. Fowler even crafts Rosemary’s “earliest memory” into an Edenic act defined by a level of peace difficult for an adult to believe possible: Fern, eschewing the typical food selfishness of her species, shares raisins with Rosemary, “one for her, one for me, one for her, one for me. My feeling in this memory is a great contentment” (Fowler 80). Both Rosemary and Fern, as part of the same study, also had an entire team of grad students assigned to “play” with them, and both child and chimp spend many a happy hour involved in games, such as Same/NotSame (in which they are given images and asked if the subjects of the images are similar) to test their cognitive and linguistic abilities. Yet as the now well-documented cognitive differences between human and chimp child began to manifest in this merry pair, the older Fern gets the clearer it becomes just how “NotSame” she and Rosemary are. Even as a young child Rosemary finds many of the games Fern struggles to even understand “too simple” (80). Conversely, Fern, growing stronger than any human, becomes increasingly dangerous. As Rosemary’s parents later tell her, the decision to sell Fern came after a series of violent incidents, with the worst one coming during a fight between Rosemary and Fern for a kitten they found. When the mother cat tries to get her kitten back, Fern “swung the tiny perfect creature against a tree trunk. He dangled silently from her hand, his mouth loose. She opened him with her fingers like a purse” (250). Fowler does dedicate pages to presenting Fern as an intelligent and generally peaceful being whose possession of a personality, emotions, and desires is unquestionable. Yet as with the hunts and intra-specific brutalities of her wild material counterparts, these sudden acts of violence testify that even “human-like” animals such as chimpanzees adhere to no human code of ethics and often engage in lethal violence against other creatures and each other, a situation that moral humans often find abhorrent and frightening (hypocritical as this may be). No matter how “human” they often seem, chimpanzees are, and never have been, exactly like us. It was in the face of this implacable reality that after a few decades it was declared impossible for a chimpanzee to learn language, the “apes who were used as subjects have mostly passed away or are retired from research,” and “Funding and willingness to conduct studies” has been “fading away” for decades (Krause and Beran 5).

Fern’s inability to live up to the human standards of the language experiments—and the exacerbating possibility of her seriously injuring someone—thus reflects the reality of the ape language studies. It is these driving factors that ultimately compel her “father” to bring the experiment to an early end. As Rosemary is later informed, if Fern had “really hurt someone,

the university would have put her down” (Fowler 270). The complex question is then what is to be done about Fern. It is obvious, on one hand, that she can’t continue to live among humans; the likelihood of someone getting hurt or even killed is far too high. And indeed, instances of chimpanzee-on-human violence exist far beyond the realm of fiction, as exemplified not only in a previously mentioned incident of a chimpanzee killing and devouring parts of a human baby, but more infamously in the case of the “pet” chimpanzee Travis. This ape had “lived like a human” for decades—even “eating steak and drinking wine”—until he “bit and clawed off [the] face and hands of Carla Nash” before being shot to death (Wilson). Yet even within this context, it is equally clear that Fern is a being that can think and feel, and is still, despite her nonhuman status, a creature deeply loved by all members of her human “family.” The Cookes, however, are ultimately given no say in this conundrum. It is not they but the university that owns Fern, a fact that drives home that no matter how “human” an animal may be or even may be treated as, *all* biologically nonhuman beasts, in the words of ethicist Lisa Johnson, are “understood to be both living being and personal property,” with particular emphasis almost always given to the “property” part of their existence under the law (41). The most significant “NotSame” between Rosemary and Fern is thus that like “a chair or a car or a television, Fern could be bought and sold” (Fowler 213). As Rosemary elaborates, “The whole time she was living in the farmhouse with us as part of our family, the whole time she was keeping herself busy being our sister and daughter, she was, in fact, the property of Indiana University” (213). The “property” status is presented as having defined every facet of this ape’s existence, with Rosemary even stating it likely that the early “Fern years” had been distinguished by so much love for this chimpanzee because they had been profitable for both her father—at the time “a young professor on the rise, gathering in grants and graduate students like eggs at Easter”—and the university (109). After he ended the experiment, however, the “reputation of the whole lab, of the whole department, suffered,” with Fern now existing as essentially a monkey-shaped money sink (109). And so Fern, who had been expensive to maintain and could no longer be counted on to bring in revenue or prestige, “was sold to South Dakota on the condition that they take her at once” (213). While Rosemary finds it incomprehensible “how any parents could have ended up with so little power concerning their own daughter” (or why the legal definition of “person” does not include intelligent nonhumans like chimpanzees and dolphins “but lets corporations slide on through”), in the material world overarching perceptions of chimpanzees as capital is omnipresent in both the language and the policies of even those individuals who claim to love them (214, 305). The psychologist Maurice K. Temerlin, for example, raised a chimpanzee named Lucy as his “daughter.” Yet in recounting how Lucy came to live with him and his wife, he blithely relates how the caged mother of a two-day-old Lucy was fed “a Coca-Cola which had been spiked with phencyclidine...When the mother fell asleep the handler entered the cage, took the baby from the body of the mother,” gave her to Temerlin’s wife, and Lucy, he states, “has been a member of the family” ever since (Temerlin 5, xxi). While Temerlin may have thus defined Lucy as “family,” he also “has...demonstrated that Lucy is a possession that can be removed from her own mother to satisfy human curiosity” (Sorenson 143). Since Lucy is “property,” anyone who purchases her has the right to do whatever he wants with Lucy, even ultimately, as her story would play out, condemn her to misery and an early death. The ape language studies ran on a very porous line between “chimp,” “child,” and “commodity.” It was, however, almost always the last definition that most significantly shaped the lives and deaths of these creatures.

Captive chimpanzees, as with many other caged apes, have long been treated as property no matter which environment they are in. As sociologist John Sorenson has phrased it, when

apes “are cute, and when it suits us, [they] may be imported across the species border and treated as pseudo-children, but they are easily deported back to inferior animal status if they become inconvenient” (143-144). The perception of even intelligent animals like chimpanzees as commodities has influenced much of the “objective” science surrounding them, as Fern’s and Lucy’s parallels show. There is in fact a historical pattern that—for all they were conducted to measure the “humanness” of our closest animal kin—the actual ape language experiments often resulted both in the early deaths of their subjects and in the conclusion that chimpanzees were simply idiotic (and therefore justifiably exploitable) beasts. And just as *Moby-Dick* argued for the validity of its fiction by including a historical case of whale “rage,” *We Are Completely Beside Ourselves* backs the realism of its own narrative by dedicating multiple pages to detailing the actual fates of many of the ape-language studies’ subjects, leaving little doubt about the violence and early deaths they frequently faced. “Docile little Gua,” the chimp bought by the Kellogg family, died in 1933 from a respiratory infection; Lucy, the chimp that had been such an integral part of Temerlin’s family was, after ten years of living as their “daughter,” packed off to the jungles of Gambia when the Temerlins decided they didn’t want to care for her any longer (Fowler 155). During her time in “the wild,” she “suffered a deep depression,” spent years “terrified, starving and miserable,” and her “scattered bones were [eventually] found and collected” a few weeks after she was last seen alive in 1987; Nim Chimpsky, perhaps the most infamous of the signing chimpanzees, “died at the far-too-young age of twenty-six” in 2000 (even wild chimpanzees, as demonstrated by the “wise and honest” old Gombe female dubbed Sparrow, can live into their 60s) (Fowler 156; Sorenson 144; Fowler 157; Freymann). He was also, despite learning anywhere from “twenty-five or a hundred twenty-five signs,” “a disappointment to Dr. Herb Terrace, the psychologist who’d picked him for study” (Fowler 157). As Dr. Terrace himself has phrased, it, “Project Nim showed that, despite the best intentions, the only role of the trainer was to prompt signing and not to engage the chimpanzee in conversation” (70).

This assessment had lasting consequences. Money for experiments involving signing chimps, Rosemary states, “dried up as a direct result” of the Nim study. Nim himself, in a real-life parallel to Fern, was “sold to the medical labs, where he lived in a small cage” until a grad student who had worked with him “threatened a lawsuit and launched a public fund” (Fowler 157). The primary conclusion that our capitalist-structured culture drew from these experiments was thus not that chimpanzees weren’t “human-like” to some degree and therefore deserved protection from exploitation. Rather, it was that they are not “human” *enough*, and therefore fall well outside the sphere of moral consideration. Indeed, in a recent article the acclaimed anthropologist Frans de Waal has noted that even now “real” scientists are still expected to “avoid any and all anthropomorphism” when studying animals (“Tickling Apes”). This is not, he goes on to argue, primarily because it is fundamentally wrong to recognize “human-like” thoughts and emotions in animals; rather it is because “explaining the smartness of animals either as a product of instinct or simple learning” both retains “human cognition on its pedestal under the guise of being scientific” as well as keeps anyone from “raising questions about human attitudes and practices” towards animals (“Tickling Apes”). In similar fashion to the untold billions of “food” animals, chimpanzees—to borrow the phrasing of sociologist William L. Robinson—have thus long been primarily framed as “a naked commodity to be integrated into and expelled from circuits of accumulation just like any other input” (53).

There has been, and continues to be, much “objective” science dedicated to keeping the boundary between human and nonhuman animals clearly distinct. Fictional though Fern’s story

may be, it is also illustrative of how for actual chimpanzees, as with billions of commodified animals, this is usually to the benefit of capitalist enterprises: as property, they bring in profit whether they are humanized or objectified, with no significant question being posed as to whether they should be subjected to either framework. The “science” that categorized chimpanzees as “dumb” further creates a validation for treating these creatures (and indeed all other less “human” animals) as tools. To again quote natural historian Rachel Poliquin on the matter, while human-made objects are usually understood as completely subjective, “animals just *are*” (106). As such, they have been “serviceable for all manner of propaganda and proclamations of truth” (Poliquin 109). Since even chimpanzees had been “proven” time and time again to be “naturally” inferior to humans, they and all other animals could thus be “justifiably” enmeshed within the most intensive reformulations of their very being as capital. As Temerlin has phrased it, “as a human being I am higher on the evolutionary scale”; the implication, of course, being that he is “superior” to other creatures and can therefore justifiably subject them to whatever he wants (xxii). As for those who may object, Timothy Pachirat’s aforementioned presentation on how the “politics of sight” creates an illusion of “perfect visibility”—perfect understanding on a situation—is fully at work in what Fern’s human “siblings” think happened to her; for years after Fern had been sold off, Rosemary and Lowell were deceived into believing that she had been sent to live on a farm with other chimpanzees (13). As they never saw her, there was nothing to contradict this declaration. It is, in fact, only years later that Rosemary learns from a third-hand source that Fern had not only never been on a farm, but had instead been caged in a “psych lab in Vermillion, South Dakota [where] they treated Fern like some kind of *animal*,” that is, a creature it is permissible to exploit (Fowler 124-125, italics mine).

While this revelation inspires almost immediate action in Lowell to go save his “sister,” Rosemary spends the next few years afterwards pretending “I hadn’t heard” where had actually happened to Fern (125). This can be read as very callous. Yet Fowler indicates that Rosemary has chosen this path not for a lack of love for Fern, but out of intense fear for herself. After having lived as Fern’s “sister” and adopted many of her mannerisms before the ape was transformed from “person” to “object”—a trait that Rosemary, dubbed the “monkey girl,” was mercilessly bullied for during her years in grade school and high school—Rosemary is very sensitive to any similarities that might be drawn between her and nonhuman apes. The fear that such a comparison would result in her being “given away” like Fern, in fact, haunts Rosemary throughout the entire work, and ultimately drives her to behave as if Fern had never existed at all (55). Yet for all her efforts to avoid hearing how Fern was treated as property, Rosemary finds similar attitudes directed at her—indeed at all women—even in the college classroom. Here, the behaviors of chimpanzees are used not to denigrate the apes, but rather to “naturalize” the “inferiority” of human women and the violent acts of human men.

In recent years, and as most famously broadcast by Jane Goodall, there has been a growing number of studies that make it “objectively” obvious that members of the human species are not as different from chimpanzees as was once fervently believed; we both experience emotions, pain, and joy, make tools, and even have a sense of camaraderie. And while this has resulted in ongoing battles to change the legal status of at least chimpanzees to something other than “property,” a new sort of “science” has also emerged. This science is not dedicated to maintaining the boundary between humans and nonhumans, but rather it describes certain human attributes as “animalistic” and therefore “natural.” This has typically been utilized, however, *not* to create any bond of empathy between us and other creatures. Rather, the focus is

primarily on how violence, selfishness, sexism, and xenophobia all fall within a “natural,” i.e. the “inevitable,” unchallengeable spectrum.

Rosemary, although she has dedicated so much of her college years to avoiding even hearing about other primates, nevertheless finds herself embedded in this sort of science in multiple ways. This goes back to her childhood, for besides being raised as a chimpanzee’s “sister,” her father—although he doesn’t think that nonhuman animals possess even a smattering of the intelligence humans do—was also “a great believer in our animal natures” (92). “He didn’t believe animals could think,” Rosemary explains, “but he wasn’t much impressed with human thinking, either” (92). It is not until college, however, that Rosemary is confronted with a particularly insidious form of the “science” of our “animal” natures in a course on religion and violence taught by her favorite professor, Dr. Sosa. Through him, multiple violent assumptions about “human nature” are explicitly revealed. As Rosemary recounts, Dr. Sosa turns to the brutalities observed among chimpanzees to explain human violence. He tells his students that these apes “share our propensity for insider/outsider violence. He described...male chimps [and] their murderous raiding parties. He asked us rhetorically if doctrinal differences simply provided cover for our primate and viciously tribal selves” (147). This perceived relation between human and chimpanzee violence does not stop at lethal xenophobia either. Through Dr. Sosa, Fowler explicates on how human patriarchal systems are now often given a “natural” root:

...among chimpanzees, the lowest-status male was higher than the highest-status female and he was looking right at me the whole time he said this...He repeated a thing he’d said many times before—that most religions were obsessed with policing female sexual behavior, that for many it was their entire *raison d’être*. He described the sexual herding done by male chimpanzees. ‘The only difference,’ he said, ‘is that no chimp has ever claimed he was following God’s orders...He said that rape, like domestic abuse, was a chimp behavior (148).

Confronted with such an explicit confirmation of the types of violence suffered by human woman and female ape alike, Rosemary starts hyperventilating, unable to keep herself from imagining what Fern, locked away with large male chimpanzees, may have suffered. Having long lived as a “monkey girl,” she is also able to intimately understand that these words function as a direct attack against human women through a “science” that would render them “naturally” subordinate. Political scientist David McNally has likewise noted that under global capitalism, such marginalized groups as “the racialized poor, along with girls...have their ‘inferiority’ hammered into them”; here, this “inferiority” has been “naturalized” through such descriptions of chimpanzees, ideologically providing a “natural” base for everything from the criminalization of immigrant populations to the indifference, and even hostility, with which legal systems commonly regard victims of sexual assault (114). Given what power dynamics are through chimpanzees being “naturalized,” Rosemary’s surprise that the attending male students were “okay with being told, by inference, that they were simple creatures entirely controlled by their dicks”—that their behaviors were driven not by “higher” and “human” traits such as logic and morality, but by selfish, even “ape-ish,” desires—reads more as resigned (Fowler 150). Yet bloodthirsty as Dr. Sosa might seem, he is hardly an anomaly: the market is littered with books detailing the “instinctual” violence of both apes and people, a parallel that works quite favorably for neoliberal ideology. As Robinson has characterized it, the neoliberalism under which current capitalist structures function exists “as an ideology [which] legitimates individual survival, everyone for him- or herself, and *the law of the jungle*...neo-liberalism sees...markets not as created and structured through state and societal relations of power and domination but as

products of nature” (55, italics mine). How wonderful it must be for neoliberal powers, then, to find the “natural origin” of the selfishness, greed, and violence that global capitalism promotes to also be present in our closest animal relative! As sociologist Jason W. Moore might put it, this particular framing of the violence of our primate relatives can leave unchallenged, and even lend a “biological” justification, to “the naturalized inequalities, alienation, and violence” that inform current power relations (*Capitalism*). Dr. Sosa even states that the Golden Rule, of doing unto others as you would have done unto you, is in fact “an *unnatural*, inhuman behavior...It goes against something fundamental in our natures” (Fowler 151). It is when writing years after this lecture that Rosemary notes empathy is equally “natural” to humans and chimps as well; “When we see someone hurt, our brains respond to some extent as if we’d been hurt ourselves...But I didn’t know this back then. Nor, apparently, did Dr. Sosa” (170). The “science” built up around our close nonhuman relatives is almost always determined by specific narratives with specific agendas, all of which gain an aura of authenticity due to the assumption that “nature ostensibly continues to represent an otherness evading objectification,” no matter what sort of narrative nonhumans have been used to create (Shukin 56). It is not simply the case that global capitalism is operating under a “kind of here-and-now logic”; it is also functioning under a framework of seemingly unquestionable *inevitability*, an assumption that whatever its mechanisms create—be it war, gender disparity, extinction, or daily immense suffering for millions—that is simply the way things “naturally” are (Seymour 10).

Rosemary—in spite of the blow Fern’s “disappearance” hammered on her own sense of safety, to say nothing of Dr. Sosa’s insidious lecture that revealed the extent to which certain humans are framed as “naturally” inferior—makes no attempt to redress either until her brother Lowell (who she had not seen for fifteen years) pays her a visit. The reunion with Lowell is not a happy one. An adamant animal rights activist, Lowell is on the run from the FBI and his time with Rosemary is short. He does not, however, use his hours with this human sister to catch up. Rather, he talks about almost nothing but the horrors that nonhuman animals experience under capitalist enterprises: turkeys that have been bred to be so large that they can’t stand up; the unceasing pain of cows in the dairy industry; the dropping of shampoo into the eyes of rabbits until they go blind. Far from the realm of fiction, this all really does happen, and lends solid, living evidence to bioethicist Cary Wolfe’s statement that capitalism is increasingly characterized by a deliberate “manipulation of life at the most elementary level” despite all the pain such manipulation may cause (40). Yet most traumatizing for both siblings is that Lowell also tells Rosemary of his own witness to how Fern, their own “sister,” was treated after the language experiment ended.

As is recognized now—and as was recognized to some extent then—chimpanzees, while nonhuman, are “highly intelligent, social animals with complex emotions: captivity...creates psychological problems” (Sorenson 72). With this in mind, Lowell’s account of how he broke into the lab in the hopes of freeing Fern reads even less like a visit to a captive animal facility and more as a descent into hell:

There was a strong odor in the stairwell, a mix of ammonia and shit...She was in a cage with four large adults...I ran toward her and when I got close enough she reached through, grabbed my arm, and pulled me so hard she slammed me into the bars...I started talking to her, telling her I was sorry, telling her I loved her. But she was still screaming...By now, she’d gotten the other chimps pretty worked up...More screaming, coming from all the cages, echoing off the concrete walls (Fowler 206-207).

Through all of this, Lowell tells Rosemary, Fern had been “signing with her one free hand to me. My name...and then good, good Fern. Fern is a good girl. Please take me home now. I’ll be good. I promise I’ll be good...And all this time, she was still screaming, all the chimps were screaming, and I could smell blood and fury and terror...And still she didn’t let go” (208). It is not long, among all this chaos, before three men hired to control the chimps come in with a cattle prod. The chimps, including Fern, back away upon seeing it and Lowell is shoved out. “I still can hardly stand to think about it, Lowell said...The way her face looked when I left her there. I never saw her again” (209).

While a reader may wonder after such an emotional punch about the role of anthropomorphism within this scene, there is no doubt it was a traumatizing experience for Lowell. It wasn’t, furthermore, to be the only time he broke into an animal research lab. After seeing what sort of situation his simian “sister” had been shunted into, Lowell not only leaves home with no intention of coming back to the human family he has come to despise, but eventually joins the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), a group that is dedicated to freeing animals from research labs and factory farms and which is federally defined as a domestic terrorist organization. The goals of the ALF, as Rosemary reports, are twofold. While they do not countenance physical harm to any living being, “destruction of property is encouraged. The infliction of economic damage on those profiting from misery is a stated goal” (238). We are made to understand that Lowell had carried out multiple raids on labs, with one of the early attacks in his career being against a university’s veterinary diagnostic lab and which resulted in about \$4.6 million in damages. In addition to direct economic damage, the ALF also works to turn human sentiments against the targeted enterprises wholesale by publicizing their abuse of animals, to “bring those horrors occurring in their secret chambers out into the open” (238). The threat imagery of these abuses alone lends to these structures is such that, as Rosemary notes, “a number of states are considering laws that make the unauthorized photography of what goes on in factory farms and slaughterhouses a felony” (238). This is no fiction either: as Timothy Pachirat writes, the “mere possession and distribution” of images and audio from the interiors of industrialized slaughterhouses is in many states today a criminal offence (8). “Making people look at what is really happening,” in Rosemary’s words, has become “a serious crime” (Fowler 238). When animals are broadly understood as capital, such a law indicates, what is to be punished is not the infliction of pain on creaturely life but rather the revelation of such pain to a larger (and presumably sympathetically sentimental) public.

Lowell, Rosemary tells us, had always embodied the best of humanity’s qualities: “empathy, compassion, loyalty, and love” (307). In his fifteen-year attempt to free his “sister” and other nonhumans from the capitalist enterprises they were embedded within, he became a sought-after criminal, losing family, the chance for higher education, or indeed any sort of normalcy for having caused as much possible material and ideological damage as he could to the systems that render animals into goods and tools. Yet in a world where even photographing the mechanisms of animal capital is a serious crime, resisting is all but doomed to failure. Lowell was confronting a system that held all but complete power over Fern and the other captive chimpanzees. It was those humans in charge of such a system that enjoyed the legal right to sell chimpanzees to medical labs to close “a budgetary gap,” and to keep Fern because “she was breeding well,” with many of her infants later sold to a zoo (215). Perhaps most agonizing for Lowell, however, is he was forced to confront how his actions put him in conflict with a society often indifferent at best and openly hostile at worst towards the mission of the ALF. In the face of such routinely normalized cruelty, despite all his efforts Lowell comes to consider himself a

complete disappointment. He was not only thoroughly unsuccessful in altering current society's understanding of animals as capital, but also sees himself as "a miserable excuse for a brother" who had repeatedly failed to free even his own "sister" from a life of captivity and forced reproduction (218).

Lowell, knowing that with the FBI on his trail he stands little chance of ever getting Fern out of the lab, makes it Rosemary's duty to do what she can to help their simian "sibling." While Rosemary does then regard the obligation as necessary, it nevertheless leaves her in a conundrum for moral, political, and ("naturally") economic reasons. Pretending that Fern doesn't exist is no longer an option. Yet moving Fern and her remaining child out of the lab would be, as Rosemary puts it, "an enormous problem...The financial difficulties were huge; the danger in introducing two new chimps, one of them a child, into an established troop severe. How could I possibly succeed" (227)? This is to say nothing of whether Fern, who now has "good friends" at her lab, might want to be uprooted yet again (227). The difficulty is only compounded exponentially when Lowell himself is caught and imprisoned for an attack he was carrying out against SeaWorld. Rosemary, while she knows that Lowell thinks "the SeaWorld orca factory is a callous monstrosity" and that "he'd do more than think this," is also never told what exactly Lowell was going to do (304). "An 'attack on SeaWorld,'" as she phrases it, "might mean a bomb, or it might mean graffiti and glitter and a cream pie in the face. The government doesn't always seem to distinguish between the two" (304). Whatever the specifics, it is considered enough to have Lowell locked away indefinitely and in such dehumanizing conditions that Rosemary finds herself wishing she had turned him in herself in earlier years, when the United States was "more like a democracy...In 1996, even those citizens charged with terrorism had constitutional rights. Lowell's been in custody for three months and he still hasn't seen his attorney. His mental condition is not good...I've read that since his arrest he hasn't said a single word," seemingly having decided that if he is to be tried, he will be "tried as an animal. The nonhuman kind" (305). Rosemary is thus left, perhaps because she had done her best to mold herself into an individual who would not be "given away," as the only one of the Cooke children that's not indefinitely in a cage. Rosemary is thus the only individual who could possibly find some way to help Fern, who is "property," and Lowell, who as a "terrorist" inmate in the prison-industrial complex has little hope of being released. "I suspected," she states, "that all these problems could be solved with cash," and lots of it (227).

Robinson, when writing about money, defines it as "the mobile and alienated embodiment of value and that, as such, it is a form of social power" (139). Rosemary goes a step further by defining currency within a capitalist society as "the language humans speak" (Fowler 306). Although she states it "offends" her greatly—that money is a "scam perpetrated by those who have it over those who don't"—Rosemary nevertheless recognizes that within capitalism "many problems, however infinitely varied they first appear, turn out to be matters of money" (228). Lowell himself had never come closer to freeing Fern than when he managed to convince "this rich guy into putting up the money to buy her, pay a sanctuary in Florida (already full up, like all the other sanctuaries) enough money to make it worth their while to ignore their waiting list and take her" (214). It is as such hardly surprising that, in direct contrast to Lowell's ultimately unsuccessful attempts, Rosemary tries to save Fern through the same route that other "monkey girls—Jane Goodall (chimps), Dian Fossey (gorillas) and Biruté Galdikas (orangutans)" did; by cleaning up their stories and selling them to support their primates (275).

"Under capitalism," Robinson states, "production is always for profit, and the realization of that profit is always through exchange of money, and for the workers, who must turn labor

power into money” (140). Profit has become, as it were, the most reliable and in many places the *only* way by which to survive and wield some influence. As such, under capitalism the best bet Rosemary has to free her “sister” and help her brother is *not* by working against this system but by turning both herself and Fern into a commodity in the form of a children’s book. Her mother, as Rosemary tells it, had “wrote the originals [of the book] and did much of the work preparing the final version, but Fern and I are whimsically listed as coauthors on the cover. All profits will go directly to [Fern’s chimpanzee] center, to a fund for enlarging the chimps’ outdoor enclosure. Cards for donations will also be slipped inside each book” (Fowler 297). This is thus yet another way in which to embed chimpanzees, and indeed Rosemary herself, into a capitalist framework in which money holds significant power. One cannot, however, particularly blame Rosemary for her quasi-successful attempts to rescue Fern from being a commodity by re-presenting her as a commodity, albeit one that should have a nice life. Stories surrounding actual apes have long proven themselves to be both popular and powerful means by which to accumulate the attention and money now necessary for conservation; as mentioned before, even major figures in primatology such as Goodall and Temerin have identified the tales of Tarzan and Dr. Doolittle as motivating their love of apes. Rosemary herself, though a fictional woman, in this too mirrors the actions of many another actual “monkey girl” in her attempts to rescue apes by presenting them to an audience who will be “delighted and perplexed by the obvious similarities” between themselves and the other primates (Jahme 220). There is a long and sexist history of female primatologists being “told how attractive they are and how impressive it is that a beautiful woman has chosen such a difficult career,” and this problematic history includes having their stories structured to resemble earlier narratives of the colonial era (Jahme 223). Yet it is this same attraction, and these same narrative structures, that many women primatologists have capitalized upon to try to save the apes they love. As evolutionary psychologist Carole Jahme stated, Dian Fossey and Jane Goodall themselves became even early on in their careers “masters at making their own story palatable to a Western audience” (231). Goodall, although initially reluctant to do so, “quickly realized the necessity of publishing her work”: the fame and the money her books generated gave her “extra power...in the world of conservation” (223). Goodall, it would seem, has long lived under the terror “that the money would dry up if National Geographic” and other news sources “did not get the desired pictures [of] women and nature,” and has as such traveled, lectured, and posed with chimpanzees constantly to accumulate as much capital as possible to help her beloved apes (225). Such commodification is almost equally true of Fossey. In the film version of *Gorillas in the Mist* (1988), which tells the “true story” of her life and conservation work through the more “traditionally” attractive Sigourney Weaver, Fossey’s character has been “edited” to be more appealing. “Fossey’s character,” as Jahme puts it, “was softened by the scriptwriter, making her less complicated and more obviously sympathetic than she actually was” (230). And as in keeping with these material histories and Rosemary’s role as an often self-aware and sardonic narrator, she is deliberate in explaining the extent to which she lied about the hard truths of her life in order to compose a soft and saleable narrative. The children’s book, Rosemary states, does not show who “I really am, of course, but an airbrushed version of me, more marketable, easier to love. The me that teaches kindergarten and not the me who will never have children. The me who loves my sister and not the me who got her sent away” (Fowler 298). While the presentation of their stories may thus heavily alter “the truth,” the selling of such stories has nevertheless for decades served many primatologists and many primates as one of the more successful means by which they are able to survive in a world increasingly defined by capitalist enterprises.

At the end of *We Are Completely Beside Ourselves*, Rosemary has, through the book starring her and Fern, garnered enough capital to buy Fern and even renovate “the Uljevik Lab” into “the Center for Primate Communication” (294). While it contains only six chimps (compared to the hundreds that are currently being thrust to one sanctuary or another), they are, as Rosemary puts it “cared for in the best way possible” (296). For all this, however, “their lives are not enviable. They need more room inside and much more out. They need birds, trees, streams with frogs, and insect chorus, all of nature unorchestrated. They need more surprise in their lives” (296). Rosemary further understands that she and Fern, although so similar that they were once raised as sisters, are defined by a reality of loss and imprisonment. They “will never touch each other again, never sit with our arms around each other, never walk in tandem as if we were a single person. This dream sanctuary is the best solution I can imagine—an electrified fence around us, a bulletproof wall between” (297). As is often the case with many great apes now, it was only through this re-inscribing of Fern into a capitalist framework, and indeed through the additional commodification of the women who care for her, that enough money is generated to keep Fern situated in somewhat decent conditions. Whether she was treated as a human child, as a source of future income, or as an “smart” but potentially dangerous animal that nevertheless deserves at least some care, Fern, intelligent, emotional creature though she may be, had always been “property.” Rosemary, though she may wish to give Fern more, must work constantly and worry always over whether she has enough money to keep even the small sanctuary she has functioning. Both woman and ape, as such, are forever embedded into the logic of capitalism, compelled to live under what it will and will not permit. Fiction though it is, *We Are Completely Besides Ourselves* thus demonstrates how, from chimp to chicken and even into the realm of the biologically human, the biopolitics of capitalism has ensured that we are all “potentially animals”—defined and treated as base property—before even the laws ostensibly meant to protect our “human” rights (Wolfe 105).

Chapter 4: A Lively Catastrophe

Chapter Prologue: Defining Apocalypse, Defining Catastrophe, Defining Life

In the previous three chapters of this dissertation, I examined three different genres of animal narrative: hunting, fecund dystopia, and melancholy conservation. In each one, I have striven to illuminate how the tenacious dichotomy of animal-as-object/animal-as-person has markedly influenced numerous framings of animal life. In doing so, I have contended that these narratives and the framings they both condemn and condone have had significant, even lethal material consequences for—as it were—mice and men alike. My fourth and final chapter, however, will conclude this dissertation with an effort to analyze works that provide one branch of alternatives to this paradoxical grain. I seek to accomplish this by demarcating a “sister species” to the post-apocalyptic genre (here categorized as a subgenre of science fiction whose narratives “unfold after a cataclysmic or apocalyptic end, which, of course, is not really an end, but rather a time in which the unspeakable and the unimaginable have already happened”) which I am calling Lively Catastrophe (Raney and Meagher 45). In the following analysis of four works of literature that I contend exemplify the traits of Lively Catastrophe—Mary Austen’s *The Land of Little Rain* (1903), Annie Dillard’s *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974), Marlen Haushofer’s *The Wall* (1963, English translation 1990), and Hayao Miyazaki’s *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1982-1994)—I will argue that the literary pieces that could be categorized as members of this genre distinguish themselves by their relatively unique framings of the many forms of life on planet Earth.

To be sure, works of Lively Catastrophe share numerous traits with more “traditional” post-apocalyptic fictions. In particular, the explicit recognition of the pain, violence, and loss defining landscapes and their life forms is a defining feature of both. Yet Lively Catastrophe fictions are predominately and uniquely characterized by their emphasis on *deep consequence*. In other words, the effects of one’s choices are not made irrelevant through an unavoidable disaster but are instead understood to significantly affect landscapes and their various life forms even millennia after one is gone. This emphasis on ongoing consequence is reflected in the substitution of the term “apocalypse” with that of “catastrophe”; the catastrophic describes encompassing, sudden, and lasting damage, but not the final and inevitable destruction of the world inherent in the idea of apocalypse. Works of Lively Catastrophe are also not only distinguished through granting their protagonists a significant amount of autonomy, possibility, and even joy in their deliberate, ongoing creations of human (and more than human) relationships. Vitaly, they also explicitly de-objectify *and* de-anthropomorphize nonhuman creatures and their surrounding environments. Landscapes and the organisms they contain—human, animal, and plant alike—are undoubtedly animate and distinguished by numerous traits that have historically been confined to “the human” alone. Simultaneously, however, such organisms are not presented as humanity’s mirror, but as sometimes shockingly strange beings that have their own needs and wants, many of which may run counter to those of humans. Yet this reality does not make other life forms our allies or our enemies; as ‘alien’ as they may seem, nonhuman creatures are framed as life forms our own species must find ways to live among, rather than against. Survival, narratives of Lively Catastrophe seek to illustrate, is something impossible to accomplish alone.

Before I begin my analysis of my chosen works of *Lively Catastrophe*, I believe it warranted to analyze the roots of the issue I am attempting to address. For as I have aimed to illustrate in my other three chapters—and for all that animal narratives exist in a diverse menagerie of forms—many of these narratives are shaped by an overarching disconcertment with the animal-object/animal-person paradox. From *Moby-Dick* to *We Are All Completely Besides Ourselves*, such narratives offer strong critiques and condemnations of many of the prevalent ways in which animals and humans are both defined as “object” and ruthlessly exploited. In fact, they go so far as to make explicit a human-animal comparison that strives to re-articulate animality as a state of being that demands dignity and non-monetary value be granted to human and nonhuman creatures alike. These stories, however, simultaneously read as giving voice to a persistent and increasingly despairing pessimism over the dwindling possibility of living differently than what ongoing, globalized, and exploitative systems demand. This is a pessimism, I contend, explicitly reflected in the contemporary era’s obsessive fascination with apocalypse, that long-predicted final annihilation of humanity and the living planet. Yet unlike past imaginations of apocalypse in which the end of our world was brought about through divine forces far beyond human power, today’s Armageddons are often perceived as originating in and being exacerbated by deliberate human action such as “wasteful mass-consumption” and the unrelenting support of war economies (Le Billon 226-227). The significant rise in the popularity of post-apocalypse and dystopian fiction of the 20th and early 21st century can in fact be read as a literary accompaniment to the dire warnings routinely offered by the current scientific community. As figures from climatologists to anthropologists to herpetologists consistently state, it is *our* material world which “is the capitalist aberration dystopia [works of fiction] depict” (Christopher).

Even a quick study of both recent history and current events would seem to confirm these apocalyptic predictions and assessments. The contemporary era faces (to name but a few notable problems) a world in which the division of labor under global capitalism and the corollary alienation from resources, labor, and essential multispecies relations has resulted in “[devastating] physical effects on the environment; a simultaneous crisis of overcrowded cities and a depopulating countryside, not only within but between nations; physical and nervous stresses...the widening gap between the rich and poor of the world, within the threatening crisis of population and resources; the similarly widening gap between concern and decision, in a world in which all the fallout, military, technical and social, is in the end inescapable” (Williams 306). Despite all persistent “comic faith in technofixes,” multitudes of localized cataclysms continue to erode the environmental, social, and multispecies interactions all species, including our own, depend upon for nothing less than base survival (Haraway, *Trouble*, 3). Popular post-apocalyptic stories and the now unending scientific narratives of present and coming cataclysms are thus incredibly prescient. Yet such accounts have also been criticized for readily lending themselves—standing as critiques of current exploitative social systems though they are—to “cynicism, defeatism, and self-certain and self-fulfilling predictions” (56). In other words, narratives ostensibly criticizing the human endeavors that result in catastrophe tend to either encourage the same isolation from other people, landscapes, and life-forms that caused the disasters in the first place, or to depict such disasters as too all-encompassing to successfully confront. The promulgation of tales of the apocalypse thus often means that not even imagined alternatives to the mechanizations of global capitalism—outside of vague references to hope for a less lethal world—are permitted to exist. The claim that it is easier to contemplate the end of

this world than it is to even consider the end of capitalism has at the current historical stage become an accepted global reality.

The increasing banality of post-apocalyptic fiction—in an era where real-life post-apocalypse(es) are often portrayed as having been “caused by everyone but [are] the responsibility of no one”—have thus contributed to what ecofeminist Vandava Shiva has called “monocultures of the mind” (Jones 177; Shiva xxiv). This state of being, which “goes hand in hand with the ecological destruction of nature’s processes and the economic destruction of poor people in rural areas,” means that humanity is rendered ever-less capable by devastated environments and devastating systems of global capitalism to imagine and find ways of living outside of the “violence intrinsic to [capitalism’s] methods and metaphors” (Shiva xi, xv). Figures such as the peacekeeper professor Phillippe Le Billon have even suggested that the multitude of resource wars currently wracking numerous landscapes are “in some ways the result of a lack of imagination...to find alternative resources,” or alternative practices of survival (12). And as could perhaps be expected from a culture as demarcated by binary associations as that of global capitalism, it has been argued that many popular imaginations of the End Times created in the last half of the 20th century and the first part of the 21st—a selection of which will be the focus of this fourth and final chapter—have come to be defined by oppositional, yet fundamentally static, conclusions. Summarized by crisis scholar Diletta de Cristofaro, the current “obsession with the end” often manifests itself in the contemporary imagination in two ways: as either a continuation of the “traditional apocalyptic narratives, epitomized by the book of Revelation in the New Testament” (in which there is a definitive end of “traditional apocalyptic history [which then] paves the way for a radical utopian renewal”); or, as is increasingly common and increasingly popular in the present, only a “dystopian catastrophe” which not only leaves “little or no hope for the utopian renewal which is so central to the latter,” but also frames “human survival” as “highly unlikely in the long run” (1, 8, 9). Of the prescient work completed on the history and nuance involved in the creation, spread, and diverse manifestations of such apocalyptic imaginings, some of the most worrying conclusions come from the observation that a sense of overwhelming inevitability runs through both types of narrative. The fundamental focus of post-apocalyptic literature is on the shape of life following a catastrophic, earth-shaking (and occasionally human annihilating) event. Yet the conceit of Apocalypse with a capital A—that is, the complete *final* destruction of the world as pre-mediated by no lesser an entity than God—continues to lend to more contemporary texts often heavily troubling assumptions about the inescapable nature of total annihilation by human hands or otherwise. Whatever its causes and results, such texts often insinuate that the presumably “immortal” effects of apocalypse *cannot* be avoided, stopped, or even mitigated. As such, I propose that one of the major desires underpinning many apocalypse narratives is not that of an end to human suffering, but of an end to deliberate and knowingly consequential human action. On a planet which is every day more defined by the catastrophic effects of human-made systems, one can comprehend how this image of a presumably inevitable (and perhaps for that reason desirable) Apocalypse would compel many individuals to “succumb to a self-fulfilling cycle, in which they expect—and potentially become complicit in—global ruin” (Hicks 32). If, after all, the numerous catastrophes of the world are framed as “caused by everyone but [are] the responsibility of no one”—that they are in fact inevitable—the moral weight of human choice and consequence is relieved (Jones 177).

An aspect of post-apocalyptic literature, within its depictions of encompassing destruction, thus lends itself to the cold comfort of inevitability. Yet of the ever-expanding gathering of fictions set after a globe-altering yet still-survivable cataclysm, this chapter will

focus on those that place the discomfiting question of choice and consequence at a critical locus within their narratives. As is also common with works of apocalyptic literature, the indifference of nonhuman forces to human life is made explicit. Yet rather than these stories simply being a grim (if desired) return to “nature red and tooth and claw” in which “base instinct” and “the law of the jungle” reigns supreme, the human capacity for active love for both our own species and all others is presented as a burden, a blessing, and a necessity for survival. In their intentionally ambiguous depictions of a “natural” landscape defined by catastrophe, the narratives of Lively Catastrophe examined here are fictions in which the perceived relief of finality is thus framed as an unrealistic, even lethal, narrative luxury. These texts focus instead on the ongoing wonder, happiness, horror, death, and potentiality embodied in life on planet Earth, shaped as it is by events and actions of countless beings in both historical, deeply historical, and contemporary moments. These are fictions of life in catastrophe that are informed, as the 19th century nature writer Mary Austin described in her work on the violently lively landscapes of the California mesas, from the realization that there is “always another year, and another”; rather than being able to rely on a singular end, existence for humans and animals both is defined by the continuation of lively events, even after their individual deaths (76). Humans, capable of comprehending the long-lasting effects of our actions as we are, are furthermore framed as creatures whose lives can and indeed should be marked by endless decision-making and moral struggle. Lively Catastrophe is a genre that allows for no easy answers, permanent conclusions for current uncertainties (either utopic or dystopic), or even knowable ends. And because of this frightening yet often sublime openness, it fosters the space in devastated environments for life, in all its many shapes, to intentionally form the relations necessary for survival, thriving, and even joy.

Section One: Animal Life, Ambiguity, and the Potentials of De-Anthropomorphization and De-Objectification in Mary Austin’s The Land of Little Rain (1903) and Annie Dillard’s Pilgrim at Tinker Creek (1974)

To turn for a moment back to Cristofaro’s analysis of Armageddon, she notes that “dystopian apocalyptic novels are...not an exclusively twenty-first century phenomenon” (5). Indeed, the majority of the literary pieces considered in this chapter were composed in the second half of the twentieth century, which had “seen the flourishing of a rich SF dystopian apocalyptic tradition fuelled by historical events that have allowed us to ‘see in a strange perspective what the end would actually look like’” (Cristofaro 5). Global warfare, the creation and use of nuclear weaponry, death camps, and environmental devastation on a planetary scale all defined the most extreme material mini-apocalypses of that century, and literature was not slow to embed their forms and the anxieties they produced into imaginings of what final End might yet be engendered. The fictions of Lively Catastrophe take much of their imagery and plot points from more “traditional” visions of the post-apocalyptic. Yet I contend that the first two literary works considered in this chapter—Austin’s *The Land of Little Rain* and Dillard’s *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*—exemplify how many of Lively Catastrophe’s important traits are not particularly common within the post-apocalyptic genre. Rather, they appear to have been fostered more through a branch of 20th century nature writing that strove to depict nonhuman life through a framework free of the moralization, romanticization, demonization, humanization, and objectification that has significantly defined many portrayals of nature and its myriad creatures.

Both Austin and Dillard's texts—as works of 20th century American nature writing in which the authors immerse themselves in a specific environment to more truly report on its wondrous, sublime, and even divine characteristics—stand as the descendants of Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*. Yet in their efforts to both de-humanize and de-objectify the California mesa and a Virginian creek, their own portrayals of nature (and in direct contrast to *Walden*) dedicate significant portions of their page space to detailed descriptions of the seemingly meaningless agony—and equally meaningless, even godless acts of consumption—that animals suffer among their natural settings. Published at opposite ends of the 20th century, both Austin and Dillard have been characterized as important feminist nature writers. Their depictions of nonhuman life, however, stand as almost the polar opposite of the “Earth Mother” model; nature is not, as they display it, an inherently rejuvenating, nurturing, or all-forgiving force (Davies 3). In fact, for all that numerous contemporary texts write about nonhuman life with an underlying sense of grief and guilt, what *The Land of Little Rain* and *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* strive to articulate is that this life is not only astonishingly vulnerable, but that it depends upon forces that would not care if it were all annihilated. Far from a source of pure joy and wonder, Austin and Dillard present life on this planet as—to borrow the words of science journalist Peter Brannen on his contemplation of the five known major mass extinctions—“both vast beyond comprehension and...tragic beyond words” (3).

To begin with the earlier text, *The Land of Little Rain* defines many of the desert animals Austin observed almost whimsically as “the furry people,” the language of anthropomorphism allowing for stronger sympathy than a reader might feel for “only” an animal (60). Such allowances for the personhood of a vast swath of animals is, however, embedded within passages expounding just how violent, fragile, and easily extinguished these “people” are. As but one example of this dynamic, Austin writes that no burrowing animal “is so unwise as not to have several exits from his dwelling under protecting shrubs. When the badger goes down, as many of the furry people as are not caught napping come up by the back doors, and the hawks make short work of them” (60). For “the fairy-footed, ground-inhabiting, furtive, small folk of the rainless regions,” painful, bloody, and mortal danger comes from every direction, “persons” though they may be (7). They are the constant victims to their predators' depredations. Nor are small burrowing animals the only creatures who suffer agonizing deaths out in the desert. *The Land of Little Rain* is also unsparing in the details it provides on just how many larger animals, humans very much included, are condemned by nature's harsh conditions to an early, lingering death.

Austin came to intimately know this landscape due to being a part of the westward attempt to colonize California. And through it she witnessed “a very squalid tragedy” when drought ensured that the colonizers' herds of cattle were left bereft of food and water alike (20). Her statement on one such drought and the following agony which an indifferent landscape inflicts upon animal life is worth quoting at length:

Death by starvation is slow. The heavy-headed, rack-boned cattle totter in the fruitless trails; they stand for long patient intervals; they lie down and do not rise. There is fear in their eyes when they are first stricken, but afterward only intolerable weariness. I suppose the dumb creatures know nearly as much of death as do their betters, who have only the more imagination. Their even-breathing submission after the first agony is their tribute to its inevitableness...Cattle once down may be days in dying. They stretch out their necks along the ground, and roll up their slow eyes at longer intervals. The buzzards have all the time, and no beak is dropped or talon struck until the breath is wholly passed. It is doubtless the economy of nature to have the scavengers by to clean up the carrion, but a

wolf at the throat would be a shorter agony than the long stalking and sometime perchings of these loathsome watchers (20).

In this landscape—in which one is, in the eyes of many of one’s fellow creatures, but another potential meal—not even humans are spared such lingering deaths. As Austin writes of Death Valley, every year this environment “takes its toll of death...men find there sun-dried mummies, of whom no trace or recollection is preserved” (5). Here the scavengers themselves seem to make a mockery of the human/animal divide; Austin even records how one man, Timmie O’Shea, had been “lost on Amorgossa Flats for three days without water,” and was only saved from death and having his corpse stripped by carrion birds when “Long Tom Basset found him, not by any trail, but by making straight away for the points where he saw buzzards stooping” (20). This mindless environment doles out lethal and often prolonged violence for every kind of “person,” with no regard given to species difference.

With her work standing as a litany of one death after another, Austin seems correct to describe these natural landscapes as “forsaken of most things but beauty and madness and death and God” (71). Though Dillard’s writing is focused far more on nature’s fecundity, she also provides a very similar image of the remorseless devouring to be found in the watery environment of Tinker Creek. Besides such lurid descriptions as that of a water bug liquefying and slurping up the innards of a frog (with the frog itself left “formless as a pricked balloon”) and the death of entire hives of bees during winter (“all dead except the queens, who sleep a fat, numbed sleep, unless a mouse finds one and eats her alive”), Dillard emphasizes the human horror inspired by such observations by extensively quoting the French entomologist J. Henri Fabre (8, 49). In one of the most intentionally gruesome examples of Dillard’s use of Fabre’s work, her reader is given his first-hand account of a bee-eating wasp forcing a honeybee to regurgitate honey by squeezing it to death. Yet such minute brutality does not end there; during this event, a mantis comes along and, catching the wasp in its “double saw,” starts devouring it alive (65). Painful as this must have been for the wasp, what makes all this eating particularly horrific was that, even with the mantis “munching her belly, the Wasp continued to lick the honey of her Bee, unable to relinquish the delicious food even amid the terrors of death” (65). Dillard informs us that Fabre, when faced with such particularities, could not “restrain a feeling of unholy revulsion” and called for us to “cast a veil over these horrors” (64, qtd. 65). Here again, and for all that nature is frequently romanticized in comparison to the depredations of human civilization, the horrors animal behaviors easily inspire are made impossible to ignore.

Within the California desert, Austin states, she had been shown “bones sticking out of the sand where a flock of two hundred had been smothered in a bygone wind” (100). In describing the lives of migrating caribou, Dillard notes that the mosquitoes these ungulates share an environment with cause them so much pain that they are driven “to a mad frenzy so that they trampled their newborn calves” (116). For both writers, sudden, agonizing death is a defining feature of the lives of animals, including, frequently, our own. And while both women thus make a romanticization of nature impossible through their descriptions of its “pure” violence, Dillard further makes any of nature’s potential “human-like” “goodness” a lie by directly linking its endless ingestion, violence, and death with its equally endless creation and support of new and myriad life.

The creation of life has long been represented as inherently good. This is likely at least partially due, as philosopher Kate Soper writes, to the “double association of women with reproductive activities and of these in turn with nature” (139). As such, “nature” is often taken as “a model of original and natural goodness” that is “characterized by [motherly] nurturance and

non-violence” (Derrida 114; Braidotti et al. 65). *Tinker Creek*’s framing of nonhuman existence, however, renders such an uncomplicated idealization of nature’s fecundity impossible. Turning to the mantises that so shocked Fabre into his “unholy revulsion,” Dillard writes that even the newly hatched ones “will eat small creatures like...each other” (64, 56). This is an objective fact she makes viscerally terrifying through an autobiographical account of how, as a child, she witnessed a mantis egg case placed in a Mason jar bursting open and the emergent progeny, “over a period of several hours, [eating] each other until only two were left. Tiny legs were still kicking from the mouths of both. The two survivors grappled and sawed in the Mason jar; finally both died of injuries” (57). With such an abominable and “natural” example of just how quickly life can be produced and extinguished, it is unsurprising that an adult Dillard, coming across a female mantis laying her eggs, witnessed this event with “an inescapable feeling that I was watching something not real and present, but a horrible nature movie” (57). She has already seen how the resultant offspring—those creatures “covered in chitin, where implacable realities hold sway”—are voracious to the point of cannibalism (60). This is to say nothing of their mother’s own consumption of her mates, an event for which the male can continue the business of reproduction even while being devoured, even without a head. As suggested by the mantis, eating and birthing are tightly linked, even to the point where it is impossible to think of the two as independent events.

“Nature,” in both its endless rapaciousness and terrible fecundity, thus leaves little to humanize and next to nothing to romanticize. In both *The Land of Little Rain* and *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, it is framed as amoral, mindless, and unheeding of the vast quantities of lives and deaths of the animals, both human and not, within it. Within the desert, one can easily stumble across “the evidence of a tragedy; a pair of sheep’s horns not fully grown caught in the crotch of a pine where the living sheep must have lodged them... We hoped it was not too far out of the running of night prowlers to have put a speedy end to the long agony, but we could not be sure” (Austin 83). Even when left to their own devices and not trapped within Mason jars, the insects both below our feet and high up in the canopy of trees are fully involved in the business of life and death, the adult members of the many species killing “more caterpillars and pupae than they would eat” (Dillard 221). Much of the horror over animals eating each other, that is, lies not simply in the fact that such consumption occurs, but also in that there is a constant *birthing* of an unimaginable amount of creaturely life, all of which feeds upon its fellows in “gruesome numbers,” often alive, and often right out of the egg case (56). Dillard even suggests that as such, the “possibility of fertile reproduction—is an assault on all human value, all hope of a reasonable god” (64).

Such assault is, however, not the end of these narrative. Even with the innumerable incursions animals offer against the understanding of nature as moral (a realization that many take as a reason to comprehend nature as *immoral*), both Dillard and Austin never present this as grounds for demonizing animals or their environments. Dillard even argues that “the world’s amorality does not make it a monster. Rather, I [we, the moral creatures, are] the freak[s]” (181). Furthermore, Dillard, in what could be taken as an example of the holism that ecofeminism often propounds, does not pretend that her status as a human exempts her from being part of this bloody perpetual feast. Rather, she confirms her own status as an outright predator, morals and all. Although the sight of a giant water beetle sucking out the insides of a frog fills her with fear (to say nothing of the frog, who’s mouth, in another allowance of anthropomorphism, is described sympathetically as “a gash of terror”), she nevertheless answers her own question as to whether she would “eat a frog’s leg if offered” with an unhesitant “Yes” (269). Dillard, then,

does not subscribe either to the view that “the human is characterized precisely by...indistinction from the nonhuman,” or that “the human is defined by what it excludes: ...the animal” (Grusin x; Shakespeare 227). Dillard does avow that our self-consciousness, “a bitter birthday present from evolution,” is “the one thing that divides us from our fellow creatures” (80). Yet she also recognizes, through her *own* ravenousness no less, that humans are “for better or worse, part of nature; it is their first and last home” (Kilcup 340). Dillard, that is to say, has de-anthropomorphized the landscape and its creatures even while framing our own status as not just animals, but moral animals who unlike our fellow beasts are both blessed and cursed with an awareness of choice and consequence. As such, nature and its creatures are presented in *Tinker Creek* not as beings that should be subjected to human ideals or human horror, but should instead be understood as entities whose “lively forces,” within a whole range of relations, are “at work around and within us” (Bennett 223).

Donna Haraway has stated that living with animals on this planet “does not mean fuzzy and touchy-feely” (*Manifesto* 30). And indeed, Dillard makes it disturbingly clear that any interaction with nature, whether for observation or otherwise, cannot help but be viscerally accompanied by the discomforting reality of a seemingly endless amount and variety of animals feeding upon each other. Yet even with the very activities of insects proving that nature is “more chomped than I’d dreamed,” such beings, as Dillard describes them, are still “our comrades-at-life” (230, 65). There is, of course, much horror to be found in sympathizing with such brutal yet vulnerable creatures. Dillard even cries out in pain to the deity on behalf of human and nonhuman animals, imploring God to “*look* at what you’ve done to this creature, look at the sorrow, the cruelty, the long damned waste” (269)! Yet such sympathy also inspires, as phrased by ecofeminist Katherine Davies, both the “recognition of the interdependence of all forms of life” as well as “the importance of non-hierarchical systems”; Dillard’s tales of everything eating everything else arouses nothing less, and ultimately presents such unceasing consumption and the renewal of life it allows for as what makes the world “intricate, speckled, gnawed, fringed, and free” (Davies 2-3; Dillard 276). Beauty and sublimity, as such, is found in the extravagance of life and its consuming nature, as Dillard did in the sighting of “a hundred big sharks pass[ing] the beach near the mouth of a tidal river in a feeding frenzy...The sharks disappeared as each wave rolled toward me; then a new wave would swell above the horizon, containing in it, like scorpions in amber, sharks that roiled and heaved. The sight held awesome wonders: power and beauty, grace tangled in a rapture of violence” (10). Animals and their environments are then not being framed as akin to humans or objects. These nonhuman beings—in all their sublime, terrifying liveliness—are instead given space to exist as entities that while forever strange to human understanding are precious for their shared ties to creation.

For all the terror that the natural world can inspire, both *The Land of Little Rain* and *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* are works defined by a love of nature and a presentation of its processes as near divine. Influenced equally by her exposure to Methodism and natural history, Austin does, despite her attention to the pain defining life in the California mesa, describe clouds of pollen dust as “finer than frankincense,” the landscape itself as the “high altars,” and even writes that desert plants “understand this work [of sheer existence] better than we; in fact they know no other” (74). Such is the glory of their fragile lifeforms that Austin even writes it is “a pity we have let the gift of lyric improvisation die out,” for “the soul is lifted up to sing the Iliad of the pines,” while the “young rivers...sing and shout and trumpet at the falls, and the noise of it far outreaches the forest spires” (74). The animals themselves, for all the bloody aspects of their existence, are likewise “left borders and breathing-space out of pure kindness. They are not

pushed out except by the exigencies of the nobler plan which they accept with a dignity the rest of us have not yet learned” (78). The most succinct example of how nature’s wonder and terror may affect a human for the better, in fact, is presented as possible to reach through a contemplation of the void of space. Stars, as Austin writes it, not only appear “as if they moved on some stately service not needful to declare,” but that “they make the poor world-fret of no account. Of no account you who lie out there watching, nor the lean coyote that stands off in the scrub from you and howls and howls” (10). There is a sense of loneliness and terror to be found in nature’s material reminder of one’s animal existence and irrelevance, and yet, as Austin continues, this may be for the best for “you who are obsessed with your own importance in the scheme of things”; a kind of Edenic peace, as she presents it, can be found in “the brown valleys and full-bosomed hills” of the violent, indifferent, incredible landscapes she described (109).

As Austin and Dillard’s accounts make clear, in comparison to a moral human these landscapes and their creatures seem characterized by a “merciless spirit...which took no note of man” (Blackwood 169). Yet it is precisely this perception of “nature” as nothing but mindless, unmitigated horror that *Tinker Creek* and *The Land of Little Rain* criticize and even seek to abolish. To be sure, Dillard and Austin find examples, both through the testimony of others and in what they witness themselves, of just how ceaselessly and randomly full of pain creaturely life is. Nor do they “cast a veil” upon such agony, instead giving it far more of a spotlight than many other nature writers. Yet they also do not read this suffering and boundless consumption as nature’s entire makeup, nor as a point against it. Rather, Dillard and Austin consistently acknowledge the simultaneous horror *and* sublime character of nonhuman life, as well as their own intimate dependence on and relation to it. Dillard even goes so far as to empathize with those microscopic animals the rotifers, stating that “I was created from a clot and set in proud, free motion: so were they” (123). By directly confronting the “messy conditions” of being alive and choosing to empathize with nonhumans, *Tinker Creek* and *The Land of Little Rain* are, as ecofeminist Vera Norwood describes it, both able to “seek out wild nature and defend it” as well as “conclude [such] explorations in a state of ambivalence...complicating the models that assume either a total acceptance or total rejection...of the undeveloped natural environment” (Haraway, *Manifesto*, 35; Norwood 36). In other words, and in direct contrast to figures such as Fabre (and to a lesser extent Thoreau), it is primarily through their observations of *all* facets of animal life, its terrors and its joys, that Austin and Dillard create a written representation of nonhuman existence that is more complex, strange, interdependent, and sublime than any human-like or object-like image could ever compose. This is a sentiment perhaps best expressed by Austin’s anecdote of her friend the pocket hunter, who, when caught in a snowstorm, was led by “creature instinct” to a “cedar shelter” under which a flock of sheep had also gathered:

He said that if he thought at all at this juncture he must have thought that he had stumbled on a storm-belated shepherd with his silly sheep; but in fact he took no note of anything but the warmth of packed fleeces, and snuggled in between them dead with sleep...That was all until morning woke him shining on a white world. Then the very soul of him shook to see the wild sheep of God stand up about him, nodding their great horns beneath the cedar roof, looking out on the wonder of the snow. They had moved a little away from him with the coming of the light, but paid him no more heed (30).

In this anecdote, the relationship between human and animal is still primarily one of mild suspicion and indifference. The landscape is not any less hostile, nor has any long history of violence found redemption. And yet, in this instance of creatures both human and not searching

for shelter from the elemental forces that could easily take both their lives, they had found and created a space in which both could, for the time being, survive.

Section Two: Temporal Creatures, Temporal Survival, and Temporal Joy in Marlen Haushofer's The Wall

In the genre of Lively Catastrophe, a question of particular importance is how a multitude of life forms—both human and nonhuman—might find spaces and means by which to live in relatively mutual benefit. Yet as both Austin and Dillard detail, that implacably animate and violently fecund existence roughly defined as “nature” presents nothing in its inherent characteristics which could be truly classified as demonic or angelic—nothing, in other words, which moral humans can completely relate to, or which might present a “legitimate,” “justified” i.e. “natural” guide for our own behavior. To compound the difficulties involved in sustained multi-species living, it is precisely the very *notion* of this possibility that not just many works of post-apocalypse but even a multitude of environmental pieces present as an impossibility. Prominent environmentalist Bill McKibben even stated in his 1989 *The End of Nature* that the cumulative human effect upon nonhuman existence has created a world in which there’s “no such thing as nature anymore”; the alteration and even wholesale, permanent destruction of nonhuman species, landscapes, indeed the global biosphere through human activities means, in fact, that now there “is no future in loving nature” (1124, 1126). It is in full recognition of such understandable grief and apocalyptic despair, however, that works of Lively Catastrophe center the active creation of human/nonhuman relationships, presenting them as both a basic necessity for human survival and a profoundly important source—even in the face of ongoing violence and its deep consequences for all manner of creatures—of multispecies joy and love. In this, Marlen Haushofer’s fiction *The Wall* exemplifies how works of Lively Catastrophe, particularly through the inclusion of corporeal affect (here defined as the link between emotion, body, and other unconscious experiences that motivate thought and our relation to others), might enrich our understandings of, desires for, and willingness to work within multispecies communities even under cataclysmic circumstances. This 1968 novel follows the story of an unnamed middle-aged woman who finds herself in a Robinson-Crusoe-at-the-end-of-the-world scenario: while visiting wealthy relatives at a hunting resort, sudden Armageddon strikes. She is left trapped and bereft of any other human companion within a forest in the Austrian mountains, separated from the rest of the world by an invisible wall outside of which all animal life—humans included—has died. Yet in contrast to the tendency to use apocalyptic scenarios as a reason to unleash the “demonic” potentials of human behavior, the woman decides to live out the last years of her human existence through and with love for animals. This sphere of beloved beasts furthermore does not include just the domestic creatures which come to compose her post-apocalypse multi-species “family”—a dog named Lynx, a cow dubbed Bella, and an unnamed female cat who all randomly escaped annihilation—but is also offered to “wild” animals from foxes to crows. Within this premise, *The Wall* presents a vision in which the irrelevance of humans, or indeed any life, to a landscape is made painfully clear. Yet it also details the affection the woman feels for the animals around her, creatures that she both depends on and who depend upon her, and whom she loves despite their intense differences from her and from each other. She even loves them—and in contrast to the long history of Western cultures valuing life forms primarily for their use in maintaining “the lineage”—in spite of the fact that there is likely no futurity for most,

if not all, of the animals involved (Geruza Fernandez Rodrigues 60). In this, *The Wall* stands as a story “in which multispecies players...redo ways of living and dying attuned to still possible finite flourishing, still possible recuperation” (Haraway, *Trouble*, 10). It differentiates as well as validates both human *and* nonhuman animal existence, co-habitation, and entanglement within a temporal, natural-artificial landscape, even while being profoundly (indeed painfully) aware of the suffering that comes with loving creatures whose minds we can never completely relate to, and whose lives will usually end long before ours. *The Wall*, as a work of Lively Catastrophe, does not shy away from depicting the great unhappiness that often results from living with and loving other creatures. Yet within landscapes where “nature has turned finite, and even fragile,” the presentation of a fictional “alternative politics of more-than-human entanglements” offers potential not simply for basic brute survival, but, just as importantly, for living well (Tsing, *The Mushroom*, 135).

As the titular “character” of this novel, the invisible and devastating border that defines the world of *The Wall*—an entity that the woman describes as “a smooth, cool resistance where they could be nothing but air”—bears numerous similarities to the disasters characterizing other post-apocalypse fictions; it not only radically reshapes most of the world through what is suggested to be a globalized destruction of animal life, but also appears without warning, catching most creatures, quite lethally, by surprise (Haushofer 8). Yet while the wall thus seems well at home in a work of science fiction, the narrative strongly indicates that it is but the most recent disaster in the long actual history of deliberate human violence against both humans and nonhuman animals alike. In fact, even before the wall appears Haushofer dedicates numerous sections of her novel to detailing the destructive intentional changes made to the “wild” environment surrounding the hunting lodge. The forest the woman is trapped within is not one defined “purely” by natural nonhuman forces or by common human use. Instead, it is a “wilderness” that had been heavily managed, and heavily privatized, for the sake of the rich, which in this novel are represented by the woman’s cousin’s husband, a “fairly wealthy man” named Hugo (2). While described sympathetically as a hypochondriac with a great “love of the forest,” the woman also relates how Hugo “was so wealthy that he needed to do something special” (2). So, inviting “his business partners along,” he “organized a hunt” into a forest deliberately filled with deer and deliberately devoid of predators (2). Besides this situation threatening to result in a cascade of even more mass death later on in the novel (as will be analyzed shortly), this “wilderness” thus stands as a late 20th century manifestation of the long tradition of wealthy Europeans maintaining their power, as discussed in the first chapter, partially through the control of “game” animals. Numerous historians have also now argued that the enclosure of what had once been common land starting in the Middle Ages, including that later maintained by nobles for hunting, has “appropriately been called a revolution of the rich against the poor” (Polyani 35). In direct contrast to more popular narratives about land privatization of this period, scholar Silvia Federici has also argued that not only did it “not increase the food supply available to the common people,” but rather “inaugurated two centuries of starvation” (70). Land privatization and enclosure, as it were, all but literally “walled” off huge portions of the human population from the resources they had long used and managed under their own free will to survive. This sort of devastating enclosure of land is furthermore far from a feature of the distant past; in addition to there being a plethora of contemporary conflicts caused by “violent competition over wild game” and “brutal land dispossession,” the bodies of power that encourage the “enclosure of common lands [which] often result in violence and war as control over the mechanisms of power are contested” have learned “to frame their interests as

imperial needs of the state” (Le Billon 1; Jones 118; Mitchell 65). Even more than this, these same interests often end up articulating “inclusion in the polis [and therefore access to land and resources] on notions of *natural* equalities, while exclusion from it [rests] on notions of *natural* difference” (Schiebinger 10). Though they are the result of a fabricated hierarchy, in other words, the violence that underpins land and resource dispossession has both explicitly and implicitly been defined as “natural,” unquestionable, inevitable. *The Wall*’s unnamed narrator, then, lived a life defined by, indeed was even saved by, the privileged ownership of land and resources that concealed histories of exclusion and violence put into the hands of very few individuals. Not only is Hugo and the humans he chooses to share it with the only ones permitted to take advantage of the forest landscape, but even the dog Lynx—who first appears as the hunting lodge’s hound—bears traces of such violence: the actual lynxes that had once roamed the forest, we are informed, had “been hunted to extinction so long ago that nobody in the valley had any idea of what they were like. Maybe one of Lynx’s ancestors had killed the last real lynx, and kept its name as a victory prize” (Haushofer 30). Even before the wall makes its sudden and silent appearance, Haushofer makes it clear that deliberate human violence has already significantly shaped this landscape.

In his work on refugees and the violence used to create and maintain state borders, professor of geography Reece Jones writes that the “place-based version of history is not natural and eternal; it is a technology of governance akin to a wall, a property deed, and a border guard that legitimates the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few and protects the privileges that have accrued through the enclosure of land and resources” (166). Such “technology of governance” applies to language as well; geographer Jason W. Moore, for example, has argued that the word “Anthropocene” (commonly defined as the “era when humans change conditions of the Earth”) is both misleading and even manipulative (Sörlin 13). As he puts it, the term maintains the old dichotomy of the “human enterprise” against the “great forces of nature” as well as leaves unchallenged “the naturalized inequalities, alienation, and violence” that informs current power relations (qtd. Sörlin 2). This “naturalization” of every form of deliberate brutality from war and its myriad violences to anthropogenic environmental degradation, thus framed as akin to nature’s supposed inevitable processes, can then be presented as situations in which “no one need be responsible” (Tsing, *The Mushroom*, 114). While Haushofer does portray the human/animal divide as more porous than it is usually presented, however, she also explicitly depicts human-caused environmental catastrophe not as an inevitability of human “nature,” but rather as something deliberately fostered by those in power. Even the wall is explained as an intentionally created “piece of devilry”; “I assumed,” the woman writes, that the wall is “a new weapon that one of the major powers had managed to keep secret; an ideal weapon [for it does nothing less than convert a landscape into the blank slate, “uninhabited” spaces that “frontier” lands have long been presented as], it left the earth untouched and killed only humans and animals” (Haushofer 31, 31-32). This is a weapon, in other words, that could allow its wielders to “make” a frontier by quickening the process of annihilating all animal life forms on the desired track of land. Yet in so assuming that distance would spare them from the wall’s lethal effects—in so violently embracing popular fantasies of “one-against-all survival”—those who engineered the wall doomed in one blow their targets, the majority of life on Earth, and themselves (Tsing, *The Mushroom*, 28). As the woman sardonically muses, the wall was “too successful. The victors are such a long time coming” (Haushofer 32). As the years roll by, the woman becomes convinced that the wall’s catastrophic effects were global. No planes fly overhead. No living being is glimpsed on the other side of the wall. Vegetation, hindered neither

by human activity nor browsing animals, slowly swallows buildings and the bodies of the wall's victims. While the increasing abundance of plant life on one side of the wall may suggest a return to "pure" nature, even this human-less landscape is one that is as much artifact as it is "natural"; even after the end of humanity, the deep consequences of human actions continue to significantly shape what forms nonhuman life takes.

The woman's side of the wall, with its animals spared the killing effect that swept through the rest of the world, thus stands as possibly the only somewhat "pure" environment left. Yet *The Wall*, even with its opening globalized socioecological catastrophe, works in direct contrast to the common "nature good"/ "humans bad" dichotomy that anthropogenic destruction often inspires. As with Austin and Dillard, Haushofer is also unsparing in her depictions of both the violently animate changes that define the nonhuman world as well as the agony that accompanies a "natural" creaturely existence. In but one of several similar scenes, for example, the woman, while out on a walk with Lynx, comes upon a dead chamois. The chamois' corpse shows clear signs of mange, and in a flash of empathy the woman imagines this animal's final moments and agonizing death; "an ostracized and lonely animal...[it] had come down from the scree slopes...to creep, dying and blind, into this cave" (108). Slow and painful as this death is on its own, what makes it worse for the woman is that there had been nothing she could have done to prevent this, "no alternative but to watch [the chamois'] misery" (182). As terrible as this particular death is, the chamois is also far from the only corpse the woman encounters. She stumbles constantly across dead fish, dead crows, and during winter, as she recounts, "frozen roe deer and a red deer calf, and who knows how many I didn't find" (121). It is little wonder then that the woman sometimes feels "nature" is, to give her words, "one great trap for its creatures" (212). The woman, as with any other creature in this "pure" environment, cannot hope to keep herself and her animals alive without often backbreaking effort, and must continually perform grueling labor in spite of sickness, pain, and exhaustion. Even so, and all despite her best efforts, she is often a powerless witness to the "suffering inseparable from hunger, disease, and predation" that shapes animal life (Soulé 731). Rather than entirely following the dystopian insistence that "'we' are our own worst enemy," *The Wall* thus indicates something potentially far more chilling; that the nonhuman world, defined by multispecies interactions though it may be, has never needed us, and would in no way fight against or mourn either our passing or its own (Christopher).

There is, as this novel presents, an all but insurmountable void between the human sense of fairness and morality and the material world as it exists, a gap that sometimes overwhelms the woman and leaves her in utter despair. Yet while *The Wall* does take pains to do away with the notion that "nature" is akin to an all-giving and all-forgiving mother, it also avoids, as philosopher Theodor Adorno might phrase it, constructing this "wild" landscape as "an inherently antagonistic world" (45). Rather, it takes particular care to state through narrative that while it would be (and has been!) catastrophic for humans to take nature as their model of morality, landscapes, and the animals within, cannot and indeed should not be held to human ethical standards. While species difference means that there is an almost as invisible and insurmountable "wall" between human existence and nonhuman being as there is between the woman and the outside world, it is a barrier that must be acknowledged, accepted, and worked within for multispecies co-habitation to even function. And even for the infinite varieties of difference between humans and other beings (and all the potentialities for violence therein), these same "nonhuman players are [presented as] necessary in every fiber of the tissues of the urgently

needed” stories and situations concerned with surviving well in heavily damaged landscapes (Haraway, *Trouble*, 55).

It is of course all very well to wax poetic about the necessity of accepting and acting ethically towards a cornucopia of our fellow creatures, be they wild, domestic, or feral. Yet as *The Wall* depicts time after time again, such acceptance (necessary though it may be) is often defined by anguish and death. In *The Wall*, this dynamic is powerfully illustrated in a series of events that begin with the birth of a beautiful white kitten, the only survivor from the old cat’s first litter and quite the exotic in this “wild” landscape. The woman, who names the kitten Pearl, thinks of her as “a little miracle” and loves this creature dearly (Haushofer 61). Pearl even becomes the closest creature the woman has to a traditional pet; in addition to serving no utilitarian role, Pearl was also “more peaceful, gentle, and tender” than any of the other domestic creatures in the woman’s multi-species “family” (62). Though she brings a great amount of joy to the woman and the other domestic animals, however, the woman also knows that as a “long-haired white cat in the middle of the forest”—an easily spotted target for the smaller predators that survived the eradication programs which annihilated the larger ones—Pearl had been “condemned to an early death” (61). And sure enough, one night this beloved beast comes back from her nightly wanderings fatally mauled; “She tried to stand up by my feet, uttered a strangled noise and fell with her head hard against the floor...I stroked the clammy fur, and felt as if I’d been expecting this day since Pearl had been born” (105). Pearl’s violent death, and the sorrow it causes, affects the woman for the rest of her story. She is, however, later given a chance to take a sort of “revenge” against the forces that robbed her of Pearl’s life.

It is no secret that wild carnivores have often been “punished” for their carnivory, as if they were “human” enough to understand they had done wrong. The influential naturalist and wildlife painter John James Audubon himself, for example, recorded how in the winter of 1814 he enjoyed watching a pack of dogs tear apart wolves that had been rendered defenseless by an irate farmer. A quick death, such actions suggest, was considered far too good for these animals. Instead, Audubon states that as the wolves have killed “nearly the whole of [the farmer’s] sheep and one of his colts,” he was merely “paying them off in full” (Audubon 119). The deliberate and prolonged destruction of these animals, as with many other carnivores, is thus presented as both necessary and “good.” There is great comfort, such stories suggest, to be found in “avenging” oneself against the “wicked” predators that appear to kill one’s own beloved animals for seemingly nothing. And following this common human tendency, one winter while out hunting for the deer whose meat the woman and Lynx need to survive, the woman is tempted to kill a fox she finds drinking at a stream. For while it is highly unlikely to be this particular fox which killed Pearl, it was with certainty a small carnivore of its kind that had robbed the woman of her beloved cat. Ultimately, however, the woman lets the fox go unmolested. Her explanation for this decision is worth quoting in full:

Pearl had to die just because one of her ancestors was an overbred angora cat. From the start she had been destined as a victim for foxes, owls and martens. Was I to punish the beautiful living fox for that? Pearl had suffered an injustice, but that same injustice had also befallen her victims, the trout; was I to pass it on to the fox? The only creature in the forest that can really do right or wrong is me. And I alone can show mercy. Sometimes I wish that burden of decision-making didn’t lie with me. But I am a human being, and I can only think and act like a human being. Only death will free me from that (Haushofer 109).

In her decision to *not* shoot the fox, then, the woman has come to several uncommon ways of perceiving, and relating, to nonhumans. There is first the simple acknowledgement that animals

and their landscapes adhere to no human code of ethics and often do terrible things to one another, a situation that moral humans often find abhorrent. When nature's "cruelty" is taken into account, it is little wonder that "the wild" is often perceived as a malevolent entity that deliberately wishes one harm. The intense, even fanatical hatred with which carnivores across the world are hunted down and tortured to death stands as a strong testament to this fact. Yet even while *The Wall* acknowledges the unrest between the "cruelty" of nature and human senses of justice and goodness, the woman's desire to react to animals (and thus nature as a whole) as she would a human capable of understanding the full consequences of their actions, *or* to treat these animals as violently as they might treat each other, is invalidated. Throughout much of human history, "nature and parts of nature have been personified both as male and female" (Merchant 8). Yet the woman, through the process of living in and de-anthropomorphizing the landscape and its creature she lives with and around—in other words, through accepting the uniquely *nonhuman* existences of all these different beings whose lives cannot be understood through human terms—she comes to relate to her environment not with adoration or with horror, but simply in the understanding that her human ethics cannot be applied to the rest of creation. The "wall" between humans and nonhumans, as it were, can be acknowledged and respected even while forming close bonds with other creatures.

While there are numerous times in this novel where the woman feels that there are in fact no true distinctions between herself, the animals, or the landscape, she always returns to the recognition of herself as human. She is afraid that if she did otherwise—if she were to allow herself to act more "animal"—she "would gradually cease to be a human being, and would soon be creeping about, dirty and stinking, emitting incomprehensible noises. Not that I'm afraid of becoming an animal," she continues, "That wouldn't be too bad, *but a human being can never become just an animal; he plunges beyond, into the abyss*" (Haushofer 34, italics mine). The woman thus suggests that the species-being of cats and dogs and deer and other creatures come with their own demands, but that of a human aware of their actions' consequences might by necessity be the hardest to bear. There are multitudes of "ways in which *our relations with nonhumans produce what it means to be human*" (Ogden 28). Yet rather than following the common route of primarily defining one's humanity through one's ability to dominate other creatures and convert them into raw materials, the woman defines her humanity through her ability to live with and relate morally to the creatures around her, even though they will never be able to do the same. As a work of Lively Catastrophe, *The Wall* is focused on how "loving [animals] in a time of extinction," and in all their species specificity, is often unbearably difficult to do well (Tsing, "Arts of Inclusion," 18). Yet such love it is not only more possible than many Western philosophies would indicate, but is also presented as *essential* for humans to both be fully human and to foster the openness to multispecies co-habitation necessary for both simple survival and living well. As Haushofer expresses this sentiment through the woman, "if some day there is nothing [for me to love,] *I shall stop living*" (Haushofer 140, italics mine). This is a perception that offers a radically different way of relating to nonhuman entities than the standard dichotomy between objectification and humanization. It instead calls for animals themselves to be considered, to be allowed the expression and fulfillment of at least some of their nonhuman desires within the relationship. It also calls, in landscapes that have been transformed by human enterprises, for humans to labor constantly not for the usual ideal anthropologist Anna Tsing identifies as "destruction and simplification," but rather towards a model that "requires new modes of understanding" to provide what a veritable swarm of wildly different and multifaceted beings need to survive another day (Tsing, "Arts of Inclusion," 5; Merchant 6).

Feminist scholar Donna Haraway has stated that “companion species cannot afford evolutionary, personal, or historical amnesia” (*Manifesto* 82). This is a driving factor in the woman’s relations with the domestics that make up her family, with the cow Bella, the dog Lynx, and the unnamed cat and all her kittens requiring different kinds of relationships with the woman for them to all live well in the same space. To begin with the smallest creature, the cat is described as “a brave, hard-nosed animal that I respected and admired” (Haushofer 41). This creature is suspicious of the woman at first, but the woman doesn’t hold this against her, as she knows “how poorly cats are often treated,” and as such considers it “a great success” when the cat, after being treated with friendliness for weeks, finally warms up to her and soon becomes one of the woman’s primary sources of comfort (39, 40). This is not, however, the final happy conclusion to their connection; the woman’s relations with the cat involve a lot of heartbreak. As already exemplified by Pearl, the cat gives birth to multiple kittens who all end up dying painfully. The extinguishing of these little lives depresses the woman, who knows she must “simply have to bear the new loss” (213). The cat also brings the painful necessity of accepting the violence of nonhuman creatures to the woman’s very doorstep; turning the corner of her home one day, the woman finds the cat, “without a trace of cruelty or malice,” torturing a mouse to death (92). The woman knows that this is but one of the many small creatures that the cat has killed in a similar fashion, something that compels her, for a short time, to feel true hatred for her feline companion. And while both woman and cat “are entirely dependent on one another...the cat [doesn’t need] me as desperately as I need her” (41). As much as it is dedicated to displaying the horrors of “nature,” *The Wall* is equally concerned with presenting the individuality, emotion, and love that animals possess. For the cow Bella—a creature whose species is perhaps the most intensively exploited of any of the beasts making up the woman’s family, is praised by the woman for being “our big, gentle, nourishing mother,” and she often pushes her own needs aside because everyone was “too dependent on [Bella’s survival] for me to consider myself” (163, 142). The woman, in other words, considers Bella to be an all but equal partner in their multi-species family. Even more than this, the relationship between cow and woman is characterized by mutual joy. It makes the woman “so happy just to look” at Bella, and Bella, for her own part “seemed very happy with her new life” (27, 29). This animal is “precious and irreplaceable” (163). The relation that makes the human-animal co-dependences particularly clear, however, is that which she forms with the dog Lynx, an animal defined by a long anthropogenic history not only through his name, but also through his doggish “addiction” to people, the result of countless generations of breeding such animals to fit human desire (99). Yet unlike many other representations of canines in which dogs “restore human beings’ souls by their *unconditional love*,” there are many things that the woman must do for Lynx for an empathic relationship to work (Haraway, *Manifesto*, 33, italics mine). In addition to feeding him, and quite unlike Bella or the cats, the woman must praise Lynx “without fail...It was as important for him as eating or moving” (Haushofer 168). The woman also recognizes that Lynx suffers “deeply from my bad moods,” and for love of this dog she often forces herself to appear happy (66). Yet even though she must modify even her emotions for Lynx, the woman also engages with him within a mutual support system that ends up defining their entire co-existence; from “trying to give each other courage” on the first terrible night that the wall appeared to the “silent understanding” that later defines them, the woman and Lynx become equally dependent upon each other (234). This sympathy, in fact, was present at the very beginning of their relationship: upon encountering the wall for the first time and seeing the now lifeless life-forms on its other side, Lynx howls, a “drawn-out, terrible” sound that sparks “something within [the woman that] tried to force me to howl along with him” (13). It would seem that both humans and dogs are capable

of fear and mourning, and even feel compelled to express it in similar ways. Exemplifying the theory that there are “irreducible ambiguities that subvert the very possibility of determining the limits of what an ‘entity’ is,” one summer, for a time, the woman even says she “quite forgot that Lynx was a dog and I was a human being. I knew that, but it had lost any distinctive meaning” (Barbara Johnson, “Melville’s Fist,” 597; Haushofer 234). Lynx is, of course, a dog, living a dog life with dog desires and joys. Yet with Lynx, the woman forms a relationship and a mindset toward him that “affirms difference but denies superiority” (Coupe 120). Lynx, besides being her dog and an extension of her senses, was also “my friend; my only friend in a world of troubles and loneliness” (Haushofer 41). It is only after Lynx is killed that the woman feels “truly alone” (129). Human species specificity, as it were, holds its own desires for companionship, and to be robbed of it is to suffer terribly.

These creatures, which after an apocalypse come to the woman through non-coercive means, end up forming something of a close-knit multi-species “family” with her. This family, however, has not formed to ensure the reproductive futurity for any of the beings involved. While they are not together for “traditional” reasons, the woman depends upon her animals, as they depend upon her, for mutual survival and happiness. This is, as women’s studies professor Kathy Rudy might describe it, “not always an easy or blissful proposition” (xxi). Despite their status as domestic animals, these beasts cannot be treated as if they were human; species difference must be honored. This also does not, as *The Wall* portrays it, mean “equality” between the species. The woman acts as the “head” of her animal family and is ultimately the one determining what they will eat, where they will live, and even when certain members will be locked up. As such human-animal interactions might indicate, while we “are all responsible to and for shaping conditions for multispecies flourishing in the face of terrible...and sometimes joyful histories...we are not all response-able in the same ways” (Haraway, *Trouble*, 29). Even so, the woman and her animal companions are all “beings willing to make the leap to the biosociality...[of] family members,” to engage in a “partnership ethics,” with all the necessary hardships, frustrations, and joys that such relationships entail (Haraway, *Manifesto*, 14; Merchant 14). They present, as such, a space, even if terminal, in which “the natural and the artificial [can] merge and coexist” (Heyd 2).

In a world defined by anthropocentric destruction, any relationship with nonhuman creatures that involves love and its demands is often equally characterized by pain. The lives of animals, after all, are increasingly defined by mass suffering and mass death, and many of their futures are careening, through no flaw nor fault of their own, to extinction. *The Wall’s* protagonist, who loves even the “wild” animals around her deeply, is more than once brought to the brink of despair by all this multilayered agony and annihilation. Not only is she confronted by vast numbers of dead and suffering animals, not only does she have to “keep on killing” many deer herself if she and Lynx are to survive, but she also lives under the terrible understanding that in a boxed-in landscape where “all [large] beasts of prey have been extinct for years,” the deer will eventually become so many that they will be “caught in the trap of a forest stripped of vegetation” and starve to death (Haushofer 121, 87, 86). Even while this particular landscape and its animals may have initially escaped the destruction wrought by the wall, its forced separation from the rest of the world, and the forced removal of its once-aborred predators, has all but condemned many more creatures to a “slow death”; it has, in other words, rendered the forest and a multitude of lives within it terminal. There is not much, the woman realizes, that she can do in the face of such overwhelming future death. Yet as with her response to nature’s mindlessness (and even though she has suicidal thoughts throughout the first half of the narrative), she never stops caring for the animals, never stops in her attempts to “interact with non-humans in empathic and ethical ways

despite their irresolvable difference” and despite their shared, all-but-confirmed, future termination (Seymour 10). Indeed, although it often takes her full strength to provide for herself and her domestic beasts, the woman also cuts hay for the deer in the winter, and even resolves (though this does not happen in the plot of the novel) to eventually dig under the wall to try and open up a space into the verdant land on its other side. This will, the woman hopes, allow the deer to either enjoy vegetation-filled pastures, or to experience a swift and easy death. Both options, she writes, would be better than the lingering pain of starvation. Kill them for food though she may, the woman loves the deer too much to let them “perish so miserably” (Haushofer 120). It would be easier, she does acknowledge, to simply not care about the deer or indeed any of the other animals in her life: “Loving and looking after another creature,” as she puts it, “is a very troublesome business, and much harder than killing and destruction” (140). Yet in loving the deer, and despite how painful it often is, the woman refuses to “operate out of immediate or extended self-interest” (Seymour 12). For her, even wild animals in an imperiled landscape are worth the trouble that love prompts. *The Wall’s* narrative thus insists that “environmental catastrophe *does* matter, even or perhaps especially, if we are not going to witness its effects” (Seymour 18).

At the beginning of her seminal work on how to (try) surviving in capitalist ruins, Anna Tsing asked, “What do you do when your world starts to fall apart” (Tsing, *The Mushroom*, 1)? The answer, for her, was to find ways to live “in common play”—violent and exhausting though it often is—with a multitude of other life forms (287). In her work on the necessity of living with and loving animals, ethicist Kathy Rudy echoes many of Tsing’s theories, but puts particular emphasis on the necessity of stories centered on the creation and continuation of such “play.” She even argues that without stories, “our relationship to animals,” and by extension other beings, “will truly be jeopardized” (Rudy 203). Stories, after all, are composed of “affective connections, including compassion and empathy, and show how these connections have a...rational component” (Adams and Gruen 3). *The Wall’s* protagonist herself falls back on stories about animals to explain why she loves her beasts far beyond any strictly utilitarian (and alienating) value they might possess; prisoners, she writes, “have tamed rats, spider and flies and begun to love them. I think they acted in accordance with their situation. The barriers between animal and human come down very easily...if we are lonely and unhappy we gladly accept the friendship of our distant relations” (Haushofer 207). “There is no impulse,” she goes on to claim, “more rational than love” (210). *The Wall*, in its beginning, acknowledges that contemporary society often behaves as if animals and others are simply “objects of exchange” to be exploited and even annihilated for human ends (Tsing, *The Mushroom*, 121). Yet in following life in the aftermath of (un)natural disaster, it argues through its tale that *not* loving animals, not following through with the hard work that comes with wanting to make a world good for animals, is not only not rational, but is founded on the *irrational* assumption that we can live without animals—and perhaps an equally irrational hatred for other life forms—that is leading to globalized catastrophe. Indeed, the woman even proposes that it was because the wall’s creators “hadn’t given a thought to the animals in the course of their slaughter” that they allowed themselves to go through with the apocalyptic project that ended animal life, including their own, on a global scale (Haushofer 32). It is only through recognizing our fundamental connections with animals and other nonhuman beings, and with adhering to our uniquely human morality and capacity to love a cornucopia of life-forms, that we might be able to ensure if not our futurity, then a relatively peaceful present. Indeed, as biologist Scott Gilbert and his colleagues have written, “More and more...symbiosis appears to be the ‘rule,’ not the exception...Nature may be selecting ‘relationships’ rather than individuals or genomes” (qtd. Tsing, *The Mushroom*, 142). There is no denying, as *The Wall* illustrates, that a

great deal of pain accompanies multi-species relationships and such love, and that endeavors to form such connections, which inevitably end in death, will often seem pointless. Yet it is this love and following through with the obligations it demands (for a “feeling for the animal [alone] does not carry out the hard work of changing course”) that could potentially mitigate the destruction of animals, environments, and ourselves (Ball and Haynes 23). It is therefore appropriate to end this section with a line from *The Wall* that recalls the myth of being driven from paradise (yet another beginning of an end), but with a radically different affect: having lived, suffered, worked, and loved with her animals, the woman states that she “was no longer freed from the earth, but toiling and overburdened, as befits a human being. And it seemed a good thing to me, and I gladly assumed the heavy load” (Haushofer 191).

Section Three: Multi-Species Horrors and Joys in Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind (1982-1994)

The reality of extinction became generally accepted in the 1800s. Yet it was not until the late 20th century that “the commonly held assumption that humans owed no obligation to threatened species or to future human generations that might be deprived of their use and enjoyment” began to meet serious resistance (Barrow 81). While there are many and entangled reasons for this shifting perspective, one vital element undergirding it is the ever-growing understanding that humans, rather than existing “above” the living world, are inherently dependent upon it for nothing less than their lives. There are few human creations that both embody and drove this changing sentiment as well as 1972s “blue marble” photograph of Earth, which offered a real-time image in which our “whole planet suddenly...seemed tiny, vulnerable, and incredibly lonely against the vast blackness of the cosmos”; in the face of such clear evidence of *all* life’s tenuous existence, in fact, human “conflict and petty differences could [easily] be dismissed as trivial compared with environmental dangers that threatened all of humanity, traveling together through the void on this fragile-looking marble” (Petsko). There is no question that the “blue marble” photograph was vital in making explicit just how frail all human existence is. Yet it also now stands as but one more modern reality that has ratcheted the contemporary sense of extreme vulnerability to extraordinary degrees. The twentieth century—which witnessed two world wars, a cold war between nuclear superpowers, and all their excruciatingly material “expressions of a human and technological will to destruction”—was defined by a litany of mass traumas and scientific breakthroughs that for a time came to hammer home for even “civilized” humans both the flimsiness of claims to inevitable progress as well as “the universal dilemma of dealing with one’s ‘creatureliness’—of living critically and self-consciously while so vulnerable to the physical cruelties of men, nature, and science” (Langer 60, 63). In other words, as the activities of “civilization” steadily undermine the planetary conditions that support human life, humans are increasingly forced to consider what it truly means to be animals.

Throughout this chapter, I have described the literary genre of Lively Catastrophe as defined by three key elements: a) a focus on the deep consequences of human action; b) a presentation of nonhuman nature as shockingly (and often lethally) animate; and c) an insistence on portraying actively created and maintained multispecies relationships as a vital means by which to ensure both base survival and a life of joy. The last work I consider for this chapter and this dissertation—Hayao Miyazaki’s 1,000+ page Japanese graphic novel (i.e. manga) *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (hereafter referred to as *Nausicaä*)—is a fiction that remains deeply

prescient for taking as its core question what chances there actually are for such multispecies living to flourish upon a planet where the human animal's perpetuation of continual warfare and eco-catastrophe has resulted in a Earth where the "taint of atrocity is universal as well as personal" (Langer 65). Within landscapes where humans have become akin to a destructive geological force, ratcheting their "animal" vulnerability to the breaking point, another significant paradox shaping human-animal dynamics has been created: that humans continue to operate to their own obvious and lethal detriment as if we exist above and apart from the ecosystems upon which all animal life depends.

It is for this reason that I believe it best to begin my analysis of *Nausicaä* not with an overview of its main character (the titular princess of a small post-apocalyptic, neo-feudal kingdom), but with an examination of the historicized ecosystems Miyazaki imagined as shaping the Earth's makeup after "The End." For far from only serving as speculations of what dire conditions the future may hold, it has been argued that portrayals of the post-apocalypse "often index or echo visual memories of terrible societal traumatic events of the past" (Booth 17). As a work of the late 20th century, there were many such traumas for Miyazaki to draw from: this manga was created in a time in which the calamitous effects of global colonial-capitalism and constant war upon the earth's environments were becoming frighteningly obvious; its creation was also only a few decades "after the greatest scientific minds of the age had used cutting-edge physics to vaporize a quarter of a million [humans] in Hiroshima and Nagasaki"; and the manga was primarily composed during an era in which such "physics" often seemed certain to deliver the same fate to the rest of the world through nuclear holocaust (Hendrix 55). In *Nausicaä*, Miyazaki brought the dangers inherent in the slow violence of pollution and the fast violence of nuclear weaponry to one speculative imagining of their logical conclusion. The introduction of this manga states that this work's most significant planetary catastrophe was initiated by industrial civilization destroying most viable ecosystems through "plundering the soil of its riches, fouling the air, and remolding life-forms at will" (Miyazaki, Ed. 1, 3). Such depredations and their resultant social upheavals ultimately brought all such "progress" (and almost human existence itself) to an abrupt and violent end following the manufacture of colossal, humanoid organisms known as god warriors—which existed as creatures akin to living nuclear bombs—and which had nearly made the entire planet incapable of supporting life during a short period by quickly rendering "almost all the surface of the Earth...into a sterile wasteland" (3). This is not an apocalypse brought on through an entirely "nonhuman" force, in other words, but one that was deliberately engineered into being.

It is vital to note that while the very first image of this manga depicts god warriors looming over a burning city, the very next sequence—which features Nausicaä flying over the fungal-covered remains of these destructive titans—seem to assure that both humans and nature could survive and thrive even after such an all-encompassing catastrophe. Indeed, this "notably dark" manga does share elements with other post-apocalyptic works in that its central Armageddon resulted in the return of many "frontier" conditions (i.e. small and mostly rural human populations must contend with an actively hostile nonhuman nature) (Napier 347). Yet it also eschews the triumphalism often inherent in such images of life after "the end"; while the humans that are left do have to contend with a ferocious nature, it is a battle that they, inhabiting a world their own ancestors made hazardous to human life, appear fated to lose. In *Nausicaä*, the ecosystems upon which humans depend have "almost completely disintegrated...except for a few scattered kingdoms," all while a vast, poison-spewing, and rapidly advancing forest composed of colossal toxic fungi and inhabited by gigantic, violent insects known as the "Sea of

Corruption” dominates the planet (Napier 347). The effects of the Sea of Corruption on human life are presented as lethal and encompassing. It is in fact the “destiny” of this future humanity to fall victim to what is known as the “hardening disease,” in which (in a fictional reflection of the millions of actual human deaths caused by the body burdens of pollution) the accumulation of forest poisons slowly petrifies their flesh before finally killing them (Miyazaki, Ed. 1, 24; Ed. 2, 511). Far from being the gods and masters of the planet, humanity’s “creatureliness”—that embodied vulnerability shared with all other animals—is enforced on every member of the species, with the steady spread of the Sea of Corruption over the planet meaning that most humans must “accept their inevitable reabsorption into the hyperobject that is nature” as a matter of undeniable and unavoidable reality (Schneider xvi).

This petrification of human flesh is also far from the only death the Sea of Corruption inflicts. In addition to releasing a steady stream of toxic spores that kill humans both slowly and quickly (“humans can’t walk here unmasked for even five minutes, or our lungs would decay”), it is the habitat of the primary nonhuman animals of this work, the ohmu (Miyazaki, Ed. 1, 11). Mammoth, clearly sentient, and at first seemingly unkillable, these giant insects—standing as gargantuan multi-eyed crosses between a trilobite and a tank—act as almost living embodiments of the most violently romantic ideas of nature’s wrath against human depredations. *Nausicaä* contains numerous visceral scenes of the ohmu slaughtering multitudes of humans in wild rages due to the intentional acts of a few. These insects are also significantly responsible for events of radical and irrevocable landscape alteration and mass human death called “Daikaisho,” a word for cataclysmic episodes in which the Sea of Corruption, as embodied through masses of charging enraged ohmu, “suddenly boils over and rises like a tidal wave to cover [unforested] land,” in the process exterminating humans and other creatures *en masse* and rapidly expanding the Sea of Corruption (215). The ohmu are so destructive towards humans and other beings that exist outside of the Sea of Corruption’s ecosystem that, as one character puts it, the “life forms of the forest almost seem bent on destroying the plants and animals [including humans] of the old world” (90). Yet despite these catastrophic acts of animal-against-human violence, the ohmu are not portrayed as demonic (as was often the case, as Chapter One of this dissertation covered, in writings on animals destructive towards colonial enterprises). Instead, it is descriptions of the Daikaisho itself that frame these gargantuan bugs as “sacred insect[s]...guardian[s] of the forest, incarnated as simply the environmental order” (Inaga 117). It is in fact discovered early in the narrative’s timeline that the Sea of Corruption “was created to cleanse the world...it takes into its body the pollution left in the soil by the old civilizations, turns it into harmless crystals, then dies and turns into sand” (Miyazaki, Ed. 1, 132). The ohmu are thus framed as not only the animal embodiments of a nature that has been “pushed to aggression when humankind tries to conquer it” and thus became an “avenger” against human evils, but also as the protectors of a holy purifying process (Murphy 12). And indeed, for all their destructive capabilities the ohmu never initiate hostile encounters with humans; they are always first incited into a rage. One old chronicler in *Nausicaä* even states that the last Daikaisho (which happened some 300 years before the manga’s story in a kind of mini-Apocalypse) was brought about due to a bloody civil war over succession in a now-lost kingdom. During this time, “warriors vied to outfit themselves with weapons of ohmu shell” and arms merchants, “Fired by greed,” “made no effort to understand the forest,” slaughtering the ohmu “in fearsome numbers” for the sake of profit (Miyazaki, Ed. 1, 216). The consequence of such disrespect for and destruction of nature’s creatures by a still warmongering, bloodstained humanity—as meted out by the ohmu—is encompassing and catastrophic:

The Sea of Corruption trembled with rage—and in the end, it overflowed. Countless maddened ohmu charged wildly from the forest. A tidal wave of insects, scattering spores like foam on the ocean...All efforts to stop them were in vain. The great tide of ohmu swallowed up town after town. The people perished. The king fell...The enraged ohmu would not be calmed until starvation brought their lives to an end...Their corpses became rich cultures for the spores...A black growth spread from corpse to corpse, until in time it had transformed [the land] into a vast new Sea of Corruption (217).

Due in great part to the violence of the ohmu, in *Nausicaä* humanity seems well on its way to extinction. The toxins that the Sea of Corruption emits ensure that many “children die before they reach adulthood,” and “populations [are] shrinking” everywhere (76). Yet for all this human suffering, this is an extinction that is often both implicitly and explicitly framed as little more than humanity at long last receiving its just desserts for relentlessly plundering and polluting the Earth. It is not without good reason that one of this world’s major religions claims that the Sea of Corruption and its veritable army of ohmu are “the wrath of heaven—God’s punishment for our pollution of the world,” and indeed for all human “sins” against nature and its creatures since (90). Far from there being any hope in forging mutualistic multi-species relationships, it is the “divine” insects, the ohmu, who “are saving this planet,” all while the “human world grows smaller and smaller” thanks to the foolish, destructive decisions of humans themselves (Miyazaki, Ed. 2, 170).

It is thus in a backdrop of horrifically violent and irrevocable catastrophic human actions that *Nausicaä* tells its story. In this, *Nausicaä* follows the framework of many another post-apocalyptic work; while post-apocalyptic life has been presented in a wide variety of forms, many speculative imaginings of the “final” disaster are depicted as the result of “human hubris” causing “environmental devastation,” even to humanity’s own extinction (Gurr 5). Indeed, one could argue that stories of the destruction of the whole biosphere being a result of and punishment for human evils have been both significant and common for thousands of years. The Bible itself features one of literature’s most famous eco-Apocalypses, with God telling Noah before He brings about a world-destroying Flood that “The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through [humans]; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth” (Genesis 6.14). Even “natural” cataclysms, in other words, are increasingly positioned as the fault of species *Homo sapiens*. Such phenomena thus not only take on the taint of atrocity that has traditionally been reserved for strictly human actions but are more and more framed as ironic punishments for humanity’s collective evil. As *Nausicaä* thus illustrates, one thread throughout post-apocalyptic works with an environmental focus is that omnipresent idea that there is simply something in *our* “animal” natures which inherently drives our species to destroy not only other life forms but even each other, making all chances of forging and maintaining multispecies relations and even our own survival ultimately impossible. *Nausicaä*, whose initial story follows a “chosen one” narrative thread, at first seems to offer a clear alternative to this omniscient understanding of the human species. She is presented from the first as possessing a “mysterious power” which allows her to sympathize with and befriend even extremely wild life-forms. Such is her “great empathy for the nonhuman elements of nature,” in fact, that *Nausicaä* is firmly “a friend of insects” despite the Sea of Corruption’s colossal bugs being “feared [quite understandably] by people as the worst threat to their health and survival” (Murphy 11; Inaga 116). It is this deep and active love *Nausicaä* holds for nonhuman life forms, particularly towards the ohmu, which most significantly positions her as a savior figure. She is even portrayed as the fulfillment of a prophecy “that a young traveler in blue [clothes dyed in

nothing less than the blue blood of an ohmu during an attempt to save its life] would reunite future human beings with nature” (Murphy 11). And indeed, Nausicaä confirms and re-confirms her fierce love for living beings through her unending efforts to help humans, insects, and a wide range of other creatures in spite of the bloodshed all around her. Yet even with her role in a prophecy that speaks of human redemption, and even with all her attempts to prevent cataclysmic levels of death, the first part of Nausicaä’s story is one of absolute failure.

It is well known and well established within the world of this manga that humanity going to war is one of the surest ways to turn even once-viable landscapes irrevocably hostile. And yet one of the last two empires on the planet, Torumekia, sets about exterminating the other in an act of absolute warfare. It does so for the sake of resources—especially in order to secure technologies of mass destruction in the form of an incubating god warrior that the other empire, Dorok, comes to possess—but also for the sake of capturing vulnerable and therefore easily exploitable humans to use as slaves in the midst of the mass depopulation brought about by the Sea of Corruption. The Dorok people, desperate to avoid subjugation and annihilation, first attempt to use the ohmu as weapons of mass destruction before engineering a monstrous slime mold that devours everything in its path, an act of bio-warfare that triggers yet another Daikaisho and leaves the land humans can survive in without heavy protection irrevocably halved. All of Nausicaä’s attempts to avoid this calamity are futile, with this “chosen one” ultimately having to admit to herself that ““There’s nothing I can do”” (Miyazaki, Ed. 2, 77). Numerous pages even depict her conversing with an anthropomorphic skeletal embodiment of belief in the virtue of apocalyptic inevitability, which tells her that humanity is ““the cursed race”” destined to be ““consumed by fire”” so that ““a new world will be born”” (63). This explicit eagerness for Armageddon is likewise present in the faiths of many of the Dorok who managed to survive, who gladly interpret the weaponized slime mold as ““God’s tool of destruction,”” born to usher in ““the end of this world of suffering”” (126). Between lives of continual agony due to both human and “natural” causes, along with the belief that it is humans themselves who are a plague upon the Earth, this future humanity has come to be defined by both a drive for conquest no matter how suicidally insane and an ingrained sense of absolute helplessness.

In such unbearable material conditions, the death drive, even to humanity’s extinction, becomes not just predominant but *celebrated* as the only route for achieving peace. Even the prophecy about Nausicaä’s own status as a “chosen one” comes to be framed as less about “hope for a better life in this world” and more about “a yearning for peace in the afterlife”; even the exalted “blue-clad one,” this brightest hope for humanity achieving human-nature balance, “is not a savior but a *god of death*” (372). And as if to further emphasize the impossibility of humanity deserving a place in paradise or even a viable biosphere, it is not the Christ-like Nausicaä but instead the ultra-violent ohmu who save the world; all while humans relentlessly wage a pointless war even while the world is on the brink of total destruction, a vast herd, perhaps even the entire species, of ohmu sacrifice themselves to the war-forged mold, allowing it to eat them and thus be incorporated into a new Sea of Corruption. Witnessing how this most recent Daikaisho—that feared destroyer of human life—is the very thing that *saved* Earthly life, Nausicaä is left with absolute love for the ohmu and absolute despair for her own species. In her own words, humans ““are a cursed people.... We do nothing but harm to the Earth—plundering it and polluting it and burning it... the ohmu are far more beautiful than we are”” (139). Faced with this overwhelming proof of humanity’s evil, Nausicaä decides that she’ll “go with the ohmu” and die to “become part of the forest, too” (140). In this sobering critique of “chosen one” narratives and presentations of human activities destroying nonhuman nature

right alongside their own “wicked” civilizations, *Nausicaä* could be considered a work of its era; while the promise of Apocalypse has long been that a world made into a veritable hell through the sins of humans will be destroyed and replaced with Paradise, it was only when the planet was facing the very real prospect of nuclear annihilation during the Cold War that “post-apocalyptic narratives begin to express *gleeful relief* at the collapse of modernity” (Hicks 4, italics mine). Apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives are used to examine past and contemporary conditions. Yet as is the case in *Nausicaä*, they can also hint, if not outright argue, that humanity’s final extinction is something that material circumstances have made desirable.

Nausicaä, throughout the first half of its narrative, is significantly defined by its exploration of the “dichotomy between nature as the absolute good and civilization as the absolute evil” (Inaga 122). It is far from the only post-apocalyptic narrative to do so, but this manga is notable for how explicit it is in detailing both the definition of humanity as a purely destructive force on planet Earth, and what violently nihilistic despair—even towards the belief in an inevitable and even blessed Armageddon—this can encourage. Yet as with other texts of Lively Catastrophe, Miyazaki does not let his readers rest easy in the surety that apocalyptic comforts about the end to human choice and consequence might provide. Nausicaä’s suicidal despair and decision to die with the ohmu marks but the halfway point in her journey. What comes after this final “end” to her traditional “chosen one” arc is a matter of continual decision making with vast repercussions, all without the redemption or solace that apocalyptic narratives can provide. The demand that humans must make one decision after another and live with all the fallout, in fact, is depicted as now embedded into every part of “nonhuman” existence. For in a narrative decision that makes clear the frightening possibility of biopolitical regimes influencing every one of Earth’s creatures to suit its own purposes, it is revealed near the finale of *Nausicaä* that the plants and animals of this post-apocalyptic Earth, from the ohmu to the Sea of Corruption to humans themselves, were not created by God or solely by nature. Instead, they were *manufactured* by the very same humans who brought about this story’s introductory apocalypse. As Nausicaä describes these long-past but still incredibly consequential events, after “the world had become polluted irrevocably one thousand years ago, humanity must have been in the depths of despair” (Miyazaki, Ed. 2, 442). The last of the “pure” unaltered humans had “sought desperately for some glimmer of hope,” and some had forged one through a “technofix” of genetic engineering in which they not only created an “incredible new ecosystem” that would “crystallize contaminated matter and render it harmless,” but also created a new “breed” of humans that could somewhat withstand the world’s pollution until this purification was complete (442, 441). “The Sea of Corruption” is thus not an ecosystem divinely made, but one whose very existence, since it was created with a “goal,” runs “contrary to the laws of nature”; it was constructed by long-past powerful humans “attempting to revive a barren Earth in just a few thousand years. When its role is over, it will die. It was planned from the beginning” (442). And this is a process that at least when it is first realized seems like a boon. For at the end of the Sea of Corruption, after it has completed its millennia-long “work,” is a new and fragile landscape where “the world [as it once was] is beginning to come back to life” (238).

It has been argued that in “coping with the trauma of post-apocalyptic devastation, Gaia’s regenerative capacity is instrumental; it animates a hopeful, forward-looking horizon” (Strang 144). And indeed, while the intensive strip-mining, genetic engineering, and nuclear holocaust of *Nausicaä*’s past era means that “pure nature” no longer exists—human activities have irrevocably changed every corner of the planet and its lifeforms—this new understanding of the

Sea of Corruption seems to offer true hope for humanity and many other animals besides. Life's regenerative power, fecund possibilities, yet vulnerabilities to mass death has meant that across its history (and five known past mass extinctions) "this planet has been many altogether different worlds" (Brannen 18). Yet the Sea of Corruption promises to not just bring an end to both the pollution and the insects that the suffering humans of *Nausicaä* contend with, but that it will eventually "give" them the world as it was when it was "pure," and in far less time than it has historically taken for nature's processes to make life widely viable after global cataclysm. Yet even with this ray of ecological hope, at this stage in the story the dynamic of "humans bad"/ "nature good" remains unchallenged. As Nausicaä explicitly believes, while it would be "wonderful...to live here with everyone, free of the poison and miasma...if people found out now...they would begin to believe again that they are the masters of the world. They would eat up this newly born, fragile land and do the same thing all over again" (Miyazaki, Ed. 2, 240). As such, this revelation still presents humans as a contamination who *may* someday "evolve" into a less destructive animal, but who as they currently exist, even with all they have already suffered, are a pollution in of themselves. Yet in another twist of the story that confirms this new planetary life as part of one ongoing biopolitical enterprise, Miyazaki suggests that the perception of humanity as an omniscidal beast has been deliberately encouraged by powerful actors. As Nausicaä later notes—and as is most obvious in the ingrained perception of humanity's role as a vile contaminant—the plan set into motion by humans who lived a millennium in the past should have put the world "well along the path to rebirth...[but] in reality, foolishness has continued, and nihilism and despair have only spread" (442). Why this should be, it turns out, is significantly because this past humanity did not make the Sea of Corruption to re-create a "pure" world in which all may thrive; their plans to manufacture paradise came with conditions. For while the Sea of Corruption could after the revelation of its purpose be defined as a gift from older generations to future ones, the humans who made it are in the manga's finale revealed to not technically be dead. Instead, they "live on" in the form of a gigantic tomb made of living meat known as the Crypt of Shuwa. The center of this massive bio-form, a "lump of flesh covered with scribblings," calls itself the Master of the Crypt and presents itself as "representatives of the great many who died meaningless deaths because of their own folly," and who had created the Sea of Corruption to purify the world of the pollution they had spread (505). In keeping with the aforementioned new glory given to planet Earth's ability to regenerate viable conditions for life after cataclysmic events, the Master of the Crypt took on this "divine" role, even intermingling it with a religious sense of repentance to the point where it describes "the great suffering of the purification"—all the agonies that humans undergo due to the Sea of Corruption—as "our atonement" (506). Sinners—here framed as humanity as a collective—must repent through death and pain. Such unrelenting torture, so this "god" promises, will ultimately result in a "peaceful...new world" in which humans can finally live without agony or uncertainty (510).

Near the beginning of this chapter, I argued that one of the defining traits of many contemporary post-apocalyptic imaginings is a deep sense of despair over the belief that the human animal could never live less destructively than it currently does. In *Nausicaä*, the Master of the Crypt presents itself as a "divine" figure that offers not only a way out of this increasingly omnipresent sense of hopelessness, but out of the agony that comes with being a creature capable of making and understanding deeply consequential decisions. If humans were simply to do what the Crypt asks of them, if they were to "read the words that appear on our body, and pass on the technology you find there," the promise is that paradise will surely be made (506). Yet as is also

inherent in much of the rhetoric surrounding climate catastrophe of the 21st century, the Crypt is not only flattening the specifics of catastrophic choices and their consequences into being the fault of an abstractified “humanity” in such a way that removes almost all accountability from itself, but it is also using this framework to manipulate a wide manner of life forms to suit its unspoken goal of not simply making the planet viable for animal life of the “old” world it had destroyed, but in maintaining the same hierarchical systems that had defined its world, no matter that such hierarchies had repeatedly perpetuated a series of apocalypses. For while some of the most obvious fast death being inflicted on a large scale over the manga’s pages is due to human actions as the last two emperors wage a war over the possession of land and people, it was thanks to technologies of immortality and mass destruction provided by the Crypt that the war became as cataclysmic as it did. The Crypt of Shuwa had positioned itself as the last bastion of hope for humanity’s perpetuity. Yet it had for centuries deliberately played as enormously significant hand in providing various rulers with the technologies that made mass death a material possibility and a reality, all in order to spread the “purifying” Sea of Corruption further and further, and all in spite of extensive civilizations and oases full of humans and animals finding ways to thrive on “contaminated” land. It is in fact further revealed that the small yet fecund “purified” landscape that exists where the Sea of Corruption had completed its prerogative is, thanks to the genetic alteration that allows this future humanity to somewhat withstand the Sea of Corruption’s poisons, just as toxic to them as the Sea of Corruption itself. Exposed to its “pure” air, they spew blood and die. This artificially designed hope for a new Eden thus also stands to serve as the last nail in a now “corrupted” humanity’s collective coffin. In this way, the deep consequences of long past human action continue to exert a troubling and lethal force over their future, and perhaps their last, human progeny. And this ensured final extinction is all within the Crypt’s plans. By making itself the sole possessor of powerful technologies over the very basics of life and death, the Crypt has put itself into an extremely powerful position over the fate of every human and animal on the planet. It had worked for a millennium to spread the Sea of Corruption by providing just enough of its technologies of destruction and longevity to permit and encourage its human “progeny” to spark one Daikaisho after another without revealing itself, pinning all blame for these series of Apocalypses on humans as a collective. When they meet, Nausicaä accuses the Crypt of only wanting a “corrupted,” disposable humanity to help it “completely replace [i.e. annihilate] the polluted land and all living things,” only so that it could make all remaining humans its “slaves to do the work for you,” rather than live with them as its fellow creatures of a purified land, “on the morning you replace the world” (507, 508). The Crypt, feeling safe in its power over all Earthly life, calmly replies with a threatening assurance that without the possibilities of genetic modification it retains sole ownership of, “humanity shall surely become extinct” (511).

The Crypt of Shuwa is thus at its core the embodiment of hiding, naturalizing, and even deifying the violence that the fulfillment of Apocalyptic “destinies” require. The calamities that wracked the living planet of *Nausicaä* were deliberate in their design and execution; there was nothing inevitable about their materialization. Yet the absolute insistence on the absolute control of life forms no matter the costs or consequences that the Crypt embraced resulted in a world made horrifically hostile to life of all kinds, humans, animals, and fungi alike, all while the resulting mass death and all associated agonies were continually framed as “natural” phenomena and “divine” punishments. It is for this reason that Nausicaä states the Crypt of Shuwa, while it had perhaps been intended as “the kernel of the reconstruction,” had become “the ultimate demonstration of contempt for life” (482). Yet what the text implies is that it is *precisely* this

contempt for life that was hardwired into the plan for reconstruction from the start. For as an ecosystem with an expiration date, the Sea of Corruption and all the lives it supports, from insects to humans, were intended to eventually perish and be replaced by a “pure humanity”—the Crypt’s own “children” that it keeps stored in eggs—or, if they were to be allowed into “paradise,” would only get to exist as this “pure” humanity’s slaves. Far from even starting out with the intention to save all of humanity, the Crypt of Shuwa has long been working from an understanding of all life, even human life, as some *thing* that can and even must be manipulated by a “pure,” divine humanity for its own ends.

In the introduction to this dissertation, I argued that for all the “animals-as-people” and “animals-as-objects” dichotomous framings of creaturely life may at first seem to present an incompatible paradox, these two perceptions share an assumption that animal life is inherently static, incapable of change. As a fiction of the post-post-post-Apocalypse (for the planet Earth of this work, as with our own, is defined by a multitude of major catastrophes rather than a singular crisis), *Nausicaä* is a story that one might assume would frame apocalyptic events as a way of shoving humanity out of civilization and through this means bringing about great social change. Instead, staticity is maintained, with catastrophic events that are initially read as apocalyptic functioning as part of a deliberate “naturalized” and “naturalizing” process which serves the “growing inclusion of man’s natural life [along with the rest of the beasts] in the mechanisms and calculations of power” (Agamben 145). The sense of humanity as a species that inevitably, “naturally” causes environmental catastrophe, in other words, is a framework whose veracity Miyazaki clearly wrestles with. History and material existence itself, on one hand, often seems to stand as a firm testament to its truth. Yet as is also often excruciatingly clear from past and current events, it is precisely this insistence on the inevitability of human “nature’s” catastrophic consequences which serve to mitigate, and even thoroughly quash, any sense of a uniquely human love for other forms of life, and thus all sense of active moral responsibility for disasters in the past and cataclysms in the making. Such thoroughly embedded naturalization of exploitation and mass death can, as *Nausicaä* depicts, even completely mask the calculated violence required to maintain an eco-social hierarchy based on dividing all life, to borrow Alexander G. Weheliye’s significant phrasing, into “humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans” (4). In this equation, the life-forms sorted into two of these categories are framed as “bare life,” biological matter which exists outside the sphere of human moral consideration and is therefore permissible to exploit and exterminate under the laws and morals of a “pure” humanity. The consequences of intentional human action upon a landscape and all its many creatures which allow exploitative and hierarchical social regimes to continue unchallenged, in other words, are by design framed as having resulted from the unquestionable laws of God and nature, which no human can overturn.

Gender studies professor Barbara Gurr, English professor Heather J. Hicks, and researcher Diletta de Cristofaro’s prescient overviews of post-apocalyptic fictions each offer unique insights into the genre. They also all suggest that the human imagination regarding the aftermath of “the End” is often notably defined by a strikingly fixed set of assumptions. In line with the proposal that the most significant contemporary sense of the human “universal” now comes from the “experience of being under threat of extinction,” post-apocalyptic fictions not only commonly present readers “with a dystopian, rather than utopian, teleology to history, the fulcrum of which is the environmental catastrophe,” but also stories that “imply our previous hierarchies and behaviors [often the exact same ones that led to Armageddon in the first place] are so easily reinstated because they are, after all, ‘natural’...[a] return to who we are meant to

be” (Hicks 165; Cristofaro 44; Gurr 2). *Nausicaä*, a unique imagination of life after global catastrophe, seems well aware of this narrative tendency; the repetitive, even static “nature” of atrocity and its apocalyptic consequences is a central feature of this manga, both regarding the story’s events as well as a point of debate among its characters. From peasant to priest to the very being that engineered her ancestors into existence, Nausicaä and the reader are confronted time and time again with the reality, expectation, and indeed the demand for apocalyptic/post-apocalyptic ends: the Torumekian emperor who sparks the conflagration is called a “hideous old monster, clinging to your throne” by his own daughter Kushana, who nevertheless suggests after he betrays her that warfare involving “parent killing his children, children their parent” is “our destiny”; the Dorok emperor, a cheerfully self-aware and cheerfully nihilistic figure, sneeringly gives a litany of the “generations of tyrannical and mad rulers” who drove the world into one catastrophe after another before accusing Nausicaä of being the same—for she had inadvertently become the “mother” of the god warrior after destroying a gigantic artificial womb created to contain this “god of plagues that we can neither abandon nor kill”—before finally stating that he’s “tired of living” as “no matter what I do, things always turn out as the Master of the Crypt says they will”; even a humanoid “immortal watchdog created by the people of the ancient world” which Nausicaä’s encounters regards her quest to “seal the doors of the crypts [of Shuwa]” with mournful amusement (Miyazaki, Ed. 1, 281; Ed. 2, 300, 298, 311, 436, 321). “You humans,” it tells her, “tread the same paths over and over again,” that “none can escape from the cycle wherein karma gives birth to karma, sorrow gives birth to sorrow” (431, 432). As exemplified by these figures, upon a planet in which “nature” as a “purely” nonhuman entity no longer exists, within a material reality where “the wider histories of imperialism and capitalism... have shaped the world,” any proposed alternative to the blatantly eco-catastrophic, genocidal, and ultimately omniscidal human actions which prop up current regimes of power are commonly framed as “naturally” impossible (Ghosh 10). As a result, for all that human societies continue to operate as if humans “are unique and set apart from the animal world,” a strange sort of “animalization” of species *Homo sapiens* has taken root (DeMello 32). Here, there is a reification of animals as essentially “static” entities that are inherently incapable of change, and the vast majority of humans—now included under this definition—are likewise depicted as creatures that have little to no agency over their own actions and “natures.” In *Nausicaä*, this staticity, reinforced by the Crypt of Shuwa and made manifest in both the continual warmongering of humanity, the retaliatory destruction of the ohmu, and now the “birth” of yet another god warrior, seems the one true constant of the post-apocalyptic world.

In the age of the Anthropocene, *Nausicaä*’s fictional and hostile human-animal dynamic could be read as one more manifestation of how the “optimistic image of ecological harmony is no longer convincing” (Inaga 122). It is a perception that has left many a writer floundering, and frequently failing, to even imagine their way outside of the deadly paradigm articulated above. Miyazaki, as with Austin, Dillard, and Haushofer before him, put much of the emphasis of his writing on the agonies inherent in animal life. And as with these other works of Lively Catastrophe, he ultimately seems to have imagined an alternative to this floundering not through only lauding the joy and necessity of human/nonhuman relationships or through framing them as pure sources of death and terror, but through looking at them in the larger context of nature’s persistently amoral realities. In fact, Miyazaki rearticulates such “bestly” realities as a potential means out of the systems of deliberate destruction in which creaturely life, from the human to the animal to the fungal, is now frequently enmeshed. It must first of all “be recognized that the ambiguity of the forest as purification and abjection is deeply rooted in Japanese culture”; as a

space that contains the means of both life and death, human concepts of good and evil are often perceived as close to useless as frameworks through which to understand its character (Inaga 123). Yet Miyazaki went a step further, and in one interview indicates that such “natural” uncertainty about “natural,” “nonhuman” spaces should likewise define the frameworks through which humans comprehend their own actions on planet Earth. Indeed, that *Nausicaä* is a work shaped by a belief in the necessity of recognizing and working within *both* the human capacity for cataclysmic violence as well as the possibility of forging ongoing multispecies relationships to encourage human and nonhuman life is indicated by Miyazaki’s own words on how it is impossible for humans to live without killing. In an interview, he acknowledged that the “power balance between humans and animals [was] decidedly changed when humans started using gunpowder,” and that “the biggest reason why mountain animals decreased so much is agriculture” (qtd. Murphy 12). He also stated, however, that “It’s not like we can coexist with nature as long as we live humbly, and we destroy it because we become greedy. When we recognize that even living humbly destroys nature, we don’t know what to do. And I think that unless we put ourselves in the place where we don’t know what to do and start from there, we cannot think about environmental issues or issues concerning nature” (qtd. Murphy 18). As with the long-standing yet frequently catastrophic object/person static divide for comprehending animal life that this dissertation has been analyzing, in other words, Miyazaki indicates that the perceived contradictions of harmony/destruction, good/evil, and even purity/corruption have had a profoundly detrimental effect on relations between humans and other life forms specifically because they do not allow for the uncertainty that interactions with a profoundly amoral, continually changing, and deeply historicized material reality ultimately demand. For a decision-making and moral species such as our own, this uncertainty is a terrifying prospect; it makes long-term plans and even the underpinnings of the ethics by which we conduct our lives seem fragile at best and nonexistent at worst, with the only alternative frequently imagined as a “nature red in tooth and claw/might makes right” state of agony-laden living as imagined in numerous post-apocalyptic dystopias. What *Nausicaä* ultimately suggests, however, is that while humans are shaped by our histories and environments, we remain creatures capable of directly responding to relentlessly changing conditions in relentlessly consequential ways. As such, it is the responsibility of humans to recognize material reality for what it has become and is becoming, and to reply to these conditions in a manner that, to our best yet always limited ability, is shaped by active love for other beings so that life in all its many forms may continue to persist free from the destructive demands of biopolitical regimes.

As previously analyzed, the ohmu’s mass sacrifice to “calm” the weaponized mold initially seemed to a despairing Nausicaä to confirm not only the absolute good of nature and the absolute evil of humans, but drove her into an act of destructive hyper-compassion by convincing her to join the ohmu in “becoming forest.” For among the nonhuman life forms—even with all the destruction that the ohmu had repeatedly inflicted on humans as well as the mold’s existence as a bioweapon of cataclysmic consequences—there was no truly malignant force. Nausicaä’s deep understanding and deeper, indeed supernatural connection with other creatures, in fact, meant that she (and thus the reader) could comprehend the pain and fear of these nonhuman beings in very human terms. As a result, even the weaponized slime mold comes to be understood by Nausicaä not as a mindless, destructive eating machine but as a “helpless and lonely mutant” crying out “I’m afraid. I’m afraid” as it desperately searches for genuine connections in a relentlessly hostile world (Inaga 117; Miyazaki, Ed. 2, 81). And unlike the bombs, fear, attempts at exploitation, and acts of mass destruction that had defined the

mold's interaction with humans, it is precisely this connection, the "love between the insects and the plants," that Nausicaä sees the ohmu providing to the mold; "To the insects and the Sea of Corruption," she explains, "even a mutant mold is family...they made themselves into a seedbed so that the mold would have a forest to welcome it" (Miyazaki, Ed. 2, 82). Crucially, what most significantly defines this "love" between the ohmu, the mold, and ultimately all the other many organisms that compose the Sea of Corruption is not affection as humans usually conceive of the term. Instead—and as likewise presented in other works of *Lively Catastrophe*—it is a dynamic of creative, destructive, yet reciprocal *devouring*. Nausicaä comes to understand this through a recollection of a personal experiment with a small sample of mold that is worth quoting in full:

...I put a bit of mold into a vial. The mold squirmed anxiously and screamed out. When I released it into a dish containing other fungi, it attacked a stronger fungus. They began to eat each other. It must have been truly terrified in the vial. But the other fungus was too strong, and it was eaten up. A few days later, something surprising happened. The mold was hunting for food among the other fungi, as healthy as can be. A few cells must have survived, eating as they were being eaten, and mingling with the other fungi...After that, it went on calmly eating and being eaten. But if that's the case...then this enormous mutation is just like the ordinary mold... (80).

For human, animal, and fungal beings alike, "the fact [is] that vulnerability is pervasive, fundamental, shared, and something we cannot ever entirely avoid" (Gilson 2). As illustrated in all these works of *Lively Catastrophe* (and indeed by the material fossil record of life on Earth), being "consumed" in some way or another by other life-forms before disappearing entirely into the larger natural world is not a glitch in the way Earthly life is composed; rather, it is one of its predominant organizing features. And this is a process that has happened time after time again even before humans became part of this planet's biosphere. That humans were largely responsible for this most recent catastrophe is beyond doubt. Yet as Nausicaä sees for herself, and even though there is no good in trying to "beg for forgiveness now," the ohmu "aren't mad with anger" as they rush to the mold's meeting point; "the Daikaisho," as such, "isn't some kind of punishment or revenge for human foolishness" (Miyazaki, Ed. 2, 139, 142). The ohmu are instead "simply trying to heal the Earth's wounds by becoming living seedbeds for the Sea of Corruption," in effect hastening the same natural processes that have allowed Earthly life to survive and thrive after five major mass extinctions and numerous smaller ones (143). In *Nausicaä*, the titular princess had decided to die with the ohmu when her human ability to recognize the consequences of her and her species' actions became too much to bear. As the ohmu are devoured by the slime mold and thereby allow for a new Sea of Corruption to form and for a previously isolated being to fully incorporate itself into a profoundly, even sublimely entanglement of eating and being eaten, however, they illustrate the intense ambiguity of this destructively lively process with not only their own deaths and transformations into a Sea of Corruption, but also by saving Nausicaä's life when one ohmu swallows her whole, and thereby saves her from being consumed by the mold.

The consequences of this violent metamorphosis are simultaneously cataclysmic and fecund. As a result of this new Sea of Corruption, the lands that humans can inhabit without a version of a hazmat suit were irrevocably halved. Yet there are many life forms that thrive within this new landscape, including a group of marginalized humans—the wormhandlers, who "have long been despised as an outcast people"—who see the sprouting of this forest as a blessing (182). Indeed, even before this moment it was revealed that there are humans who have learned

to live within the Sea of Corruption, with the wormhandlers standing as a particularly large group to do so, and who thus greet the creation of a new Sea of Corruption as an opportunity to “gather here, on this land. We will divide the new forest among ourselves peacefully” and “build nests, create new villages, and multiply” (166). What the ohmu’s mass death and perhaps even extinction did, in other words, was to bring an omniscient life-form into an entangled reality, one that still runs on a system of endless devouring, and yet one in which a vast multitude of creatures—including humans—still have the means to live. The planet remained viable for life—the ohmu were able to save the world, or at least a world—precisely because of this terrifying potentiality of life’s ever-changing form, to that unthinking allowance for such a vast swath of creaturely shapes to exist that even the human imagination cannot conceive of, let alone understand, them all. In this, even though it is profoundly violent and profoundly nonhuman, there does indeed seem to exist a kind of love.

Throughout the course of this manga, the ohmu are framed in numerous, sometimes contradictory ways: as terrifying embodiments of a furious nature; as divine guardians of natural processes; as bioengineered monstrosities overseeing a system of biopower accumulation; and even as the playful friends to a young princess. Indeed, their roles are so many that the uncertainty Miyazaki centralized in his own contemplations of human-nature relationships seems explicitly engraved into their very being. It is true that the “true nature” of the ohmu is characterized as teetering between an example of how “nature will return as an avenger” if and when humans “have gone too far” in their exploitation of the nonhuman world and as yet another example of a “pure” humanity’s power over nonhuman entities (Murphy 12). Yet their final action and its consequences is what truly marks this manga as a sobering piece of *Lively Catastrophe*. It is within their “sacred” and even man-made role of acting as the “guardians” to the Sea of Corruption and calming the war-forged mold by sacrificing their own lives that the ohmu come to present an alternative to the Crypt of Shuwa’s omniscient program precisely because they do not offer any kind of finalized paradise. Rather, they reveal the nature of nature—even that nature which has been significantly altered by humans—as an entity that is defined by violence, mass death, and extinction, and yet is the source and the sustenance of all creaturely life. In so doing, and for all that there is terror and death in the very concept of this cycle of constant killing, “the notion of sacrifice is suddenly replaced and renewed by the idea of mutual dependence” (Inaga 118). As Miyazaki presents it, such a concept of mutual dependence is one excruciatingly difficult for a human to fully accept with their morals intact. In fact, while the ohmu had saved Nausicaä’s life, her experience in being part of the relentless devouring that defines animal life leaves her in a catatonic state; she had “peered into the abyss that is the heart of the ohmu,” and as a result she must now suffer as one “who looks into that darkness [and] must endure the gaze returned by the darkness itself” (Miyazaki, Ed. 2, 183, 184). When she comes back to her full functions thanks to the efforts of a plethora of humans and animals, however, she retains an understanding of just how faulty, and just how catastrophically lethal, the desire to live in a world without uncertainty is. As Nausicaä concludes, humans “blind ourselves by looking at the world simply in terms of ‘purity’ and ‘corruption,’” particularly since, as she now understands, “although we may long for a purified world, we could never survive there” (440). From its first conception to present day manifestations, the concept of Apocalypse, as phrased by Dominick LaCapra in his work on trauma, absence and loss, is defined by a “hoped-for...future or sublimely blank utopia that...will bring total renewal, salvation or redemption” (qtd. Strang 143). Yet such hope, as LaCapra writes and as this manga suggests, is not only false but profoundly destructive, and one must as such turn “to other, non-

redemptive options” (qtd. Strang 143). It is then perhaps through accepting the deep histories that have shaped life on Earth and deep consequences of one’s own human actions that some living and living well might be engendered. Even the reality of mass extinction, as painful as it is, might be enfolded into a human sense of love.

“A life is a life, regardless of how it comes into being...every life form, no matter how small, contains the outside universe within its internal universe” (Miyazaki, Ed. 2, 443). So Nausicaä states near the end of her journey, which sees her both give her allegiance to life itself and firmly abandon her identity as the supposed “savior” of the human-nature connection in exchange for deliberately entering a much more uncertain role in which she, by her own admission, “may be going to destroy humanity” (451). For what she intends to do is nothing less than “seal the doors of the crypt” of Shuwa—that is, stop the Master of the Crypt’s omniscient biopolitical ploys—by using the same cataclysmic power that had reduced the old world to ashes (321). It is an opportunity that she first seizes when, in order to stop the god warrior from killing everyone after she had accidentally “birthed” him, she concedes to act as this bio-weapon’s “mother.” She calls the dangerous titan who effortlessly kills on a whim “a very kind child,” instructs the eager-to-please monstrosity on how to be “a fine person,” and gives him the name Ohma (a word that means “innocence”) even while she is but using him for his destructive capabilities as he melts to pieces alive, and all the while “hoping for this child’s death...How hurt he would be if he could look inside my heart...if he knew that he should never have been born” (343, 407, 332). There is a deeply immoral element to these actions, and the Crypt of Shuwa in its death throes even understandably calls Nausicaä “a devil...who destroyed the light of hope” (511). Nausicaä herself, who knows there is no redemption for her when both Ohma and the Crypt’s eggs (which “were to have been a peaceful, intelligent people. Not violent like us”) are destroyed because of her order for the Crypt’s death, is left “shudder[ing] at the depth of my sin” (521). There is no questioning that Nausicaä committed an act of terrible violence. It is even uncertain whether she saved humanity or ensured her species’ eventual extinction. Yet in destroying the Crypt of Shuwa, that “pure” humanity which—having removed itself from “animal” existence—treats all life but its own as either tools or obstacles to fulfill its own purposes and thus actively perpetuates mass death for humans and animals alike, she ripped open the space for a multitude of multi-species relationships to form without the omniscient oversight of apocalyptic designs. In killing “the Human” by means of her and its own “child” (for god warriors were also created by the “pure” humans, with Ohma’s teeth even holding a trade mark), Nausicaä denied all survivors the possibility of a “set” Paradise and brought into full play the terrifying prospect of extinction, but also the potential to find means of survival, thriving, and even joy within a world crawling with an abundance of life. “Purity and corruption,” Nausicaä told the Crypt in their confrontation, “are the very stuff of life” (510). And indeed, it is this reality that allowed Nausicaä to see parallels between her human existence and that of even the tree-sized fungi of the Sea of Corruption. Just as her own life “was supported by the deaths of 10 older brothers and sisters”—for they had “absorbed the poison that had gathered in my mother’s body and died in her place”—a “single sprout” depends upon “countless forest spores rain[ing] down again and again, dying a useless death” (482, 429, 482). It was this acceptance of such terrifying parallels that underpinned her deep bond with the ohmu, with Ohma, with every creature from humans to tiny insects. And it was these bonds which not only saves her human life, but paradoxically, yet simultaneously, transforms her into a creature who lives in full acceptance of its own animal ephemerality. It is this which allows Nausicaä to exist without contradiction as a being “who is accompanied by a god of death weeping over the death of a

small animal” (405). Her deep love and deep acceptance of humans, animals, and fungi alike, in other words, allowed her to reject the apocalyptic desires underpinning the cataclysmic, repetitive choices of the many humans who had come before her, and instead use her potentially cataclysmic power as a human to move in a new, potentially less lethal direction within the belief that, as extinction “has long been a part of our lives,” humans ““can know the beauty and cruelty of the world without the help of a giant tomb and its servants. Because *our* god inhabits even a single leaf and the smallest insect” (511, 518). Instead of humanity’s “animal” existence “naturally” trapping us within a spiral of destruction and self-destruction, our animality is here rearticulated as the element that enmeshes us within the interactions of all life forms, and thus presents us with a continually developing means of acting according to our uniquely human love for our co-inhabitants on planet Earth.

Atrocity and its taint is already everywhere within and without human animals and our fellow creatures. Yet in finding ways to live in all the catastrophe and continual liveliness that defined and continues to define animal existence, these stories of animal pain, of animal death, of mass extinction, are vital. They compel their readers to confront the often-painful realities of nature, particularly that no animal—a category to which we forever belong—will last. And it is precisely this vulnerability and ephemerality, these stories suggest, that makes all creatures worth loving even more fiercely. Writers of *Lively Catastrophe*, from Austin to Miyazaki, offer no easy answer for what form this love should take, and all the while portray such love as often excruciatingly painful to maintain. And yet even though it will never be reciprocated in a “human” way by our fellow creatures, this love and the responsibility it demands is—especially in a world as “gnawed,” ravaged, and fragile as ours—absolutely necessary not just for base, “animal” survival, but for creating means by which life in all its myriad swarms may thrive.

This is Not a Conclusion
Animal Life After, and After, And After...

Over the course of this dissertation, I have introduced and analyzed four distinct “genres” of animal narrative, each one embodying but one small section of the widely and wildly diversifying ways in which humans understand and interact with animal life. The primary goal, however, was not to encapsulate the full breadth of common perceptions shaping animal narrative (animal as enemy, animal as meat, animal as victim, animal as ally, etc.). Rather, I have endeavored to articulate a centuries-spanning process of shaping and structuring animal life to better suit the inherently biopolitical logics of colonial-capitalism as they have accumulated into the present moment. In the first chapter, I focused specifically on the Hunting Genre to follow the globalized trend by which “wild” animals were deliberately annihilated from a wide range of ecosystems, and why the ever-more frantic recognition of the disasters colonial-capitalism’s particular brand of hunting has resulted in led to an “acceptance” of humanity’s violent “beastliness.” In the second chapter, I utilized the Fecund Dystopia Genre to analyze the narrative presence of the factory farm—that techno-organic entity significantly responsible for “filling up” landscapes that hunting had “emptied out” with animals more amenable to the logics of mass production—within even imaginations of humanity’s own future. For as the steady popularity of the post-apocalyptic genre indicates, human fantasies about what the future will or even could be have been thoroughly captured by the dystopic, post-apocalyptic, and fully apocalyptic suppositions; the cheapness and mass consumption of animal flesh, in other words, is commonly the premise upon which even human relations with members of our species is based. Even numerous articulations that explicitly place themselves against this grain, as I explore with the third chapter’s overview of the Melancholy Conservation Genre, embody a relentless further drive into this pessimism. For while animal life may now frequently be articulated as worth saving, this genre is defined by the presentation of human-animal relationalities that are forever haunted by ongoing mass violence prompted by abhorred, yet diligently maintained, capitalist demands. For all that the perceptions of animals as “object” or as “person” continue to be understood as diametrically opposed frameworks, they—along with the re-articulated animality of humanity as “naturally” dooming us to destroy everything and ourselves—both serve ongoing agendas of primitive accumulation, their “naturalness” even now being utilized to mitigate anxieties over eco-social existential crises with the cold comfort of inevitability. If the self-wrought apocalypse is already upon us, such logic suggests, it is because this is where our “animal” instincts were always going to lead.

With the bulk of my dissertation thus being dedicated to utilizing animal narratives to track the creation of a very particular kind of “nature” over the past two hundred some years, it is thus proper to conclude by taking one look back at my final chapter dedicated to what I have designated as the Lively Catastrophe Genre, and question once again if it actually does offer some path away from the omniscidal rut that both “animal-as-object” and “animal-as-person” narratives commonly find themselves propping up.

I write this in the context of a push by some “climate scientists to reconceive humans as a species” categorized not by their “animal” features such as our place among the primates or possession of mammary glands, but rather through the ways by which every member of the species is operating to create a hostile, even apocalyptic planet (Hicks 164). To quote Dipesh Chakrabarty on the eco-social force which is rapidly becoming *the* major source of environmental and human disaster, “[Anthropogenic] Climate change poses for us a question of

a human collectivity, an us, pointing to a figure of the universal that escapes our capacity to experience the world. It is more like a universal *that arises from a shared sense of catastrophe*” (qtd. Hicks 165, italics mine). The human species, in other words, increasingly exists in common knowledge of the disasters for life forms, including that of humans, its own behavior creates. Rather than work to alter current eco-social paradigms, however, some respond by re-defining our very species-being as a kind of ongoing calamity. Humanity itself—forever “split” from a nature seen as inherently “good”—is thus articulated as an animal almost “instinctually” bent on the destruction of the biosphere and thus of itself. In the current moment, this can be understandable: the year 2023 has seen humanity wracked with a multitude of ever-exacerbating existential crises: three years of a globalized pandemic; a climate change emergency which “has caused substantial damages, and increasingly irreversible losses”; and is now over a year into the Russia-Ukraine war, in which Russia and the United States, two nuclear-armed powers, are inching ever-closer to direct conflict in spite of the fact such a war could easily end in global annihilation (IPCC 9). Yet in the face of such profoundly dangerous crises, state and global powers are routinely unwilling to mitigate the damage, and even all-too willing to aggravate their underlying causes. In fact, narratives of human-wrought Armageddon are themselves frequently adapted as biopolitical tools in the service of power. As Hugo Reinert exemplified through his analysis of a state-mandated slaughter of Sami reindeer herds supposedly executed to keep these same reindeer from suffering a starving death made “inevitable” through climate change, “the apocalyptic fantasy [is] the mechanism by which catastrophic anticipation manifests the catastrophe it anticipates...the State’s investment (and complicity) in apocalypse—concretiz[es] the incessant secret longing of the providential State for a catastrophe that sustains (and justifies) its expansion” (9). Thus both the long-perceived separation between humans and animals *and* posthumanism’s insistence on the blurriness of the boundaries between the two are both relentlessly utilized as particularly powerful rhetorical tools in the service of ever-more omniscidal biopolitical agendas. As Cary Wolfe puts it, “the biopolitical frame [has never been] less concerned with the distinction in taxonomy between human and nonhuman life with regard to ‘making live’ and ‘letting die’” (104).

Indeed, given that humanity may well be dooming itself and multitudes of other creatures through exacerbating pollution, warfare, and climate change, nothing less than the study of deep time and the history of life itself may provide evidence for the “naturalness” of such catastrophe. Recent research of the rock and fossil layers, after all, suggests that the eco-calamity humans are bringing into existence would be “but one of a series of such mass extinctions, the rule not the exception,” something that in fact could, “if we interpret the rock record correctly, [happen] many more times” (Ward xiii). For here is what we know: over the 3.7 billion years that Earthly life has existed, there has been at least five major mass extinctions, and potentially even “cycles of mass extinctions [of] up to 23 events since the Cambrian” (Elewa, “Mass Extinction” 1). These past Armageddons captured in the geologic layers each offer a glimpse into eras of Apocalypse that even humans—armed as we are with morbid imaginations and routinely suffering the consequences of our own devastating destructive capacities though we may be—are incapable of fully comprehending. The first major mass extinction event that we know of, which started in the Late Ordovician around 440-450 million years ago, was a catastrophe during which some 86% of all species were lost. The mass extinction of the Late Devonian saw the death of 75% of all Earth life. The End-Permian, “sometimes informally called the Great Dying,” occurred around 251 million years ago and stands as “Earth’s most severe extinction event, with about 96 percent of all marine species and 70 percent of terrestrial vertebrate species becoming

extinct” (Elewa, “Late Permian,” 61). The End-Triassic event ended 80% of all life. And the End-Cretaceous, perhaps the most famous of the five known major mass extinctions for bringing about the demise of the dinosaurs, overall witnessed the passing of 76% of all living beings. These percentages, along with the fossils and rocks upon which these apocalyptic eras have been reconstructed, can at best only offer an abstraction of what it was like to live and die during these epochs where planet Earth became lethal to vast swaths of life. What is undeniable, however, is that even though human activity is currently the primary cause for an ongoing sixth mass extinction, extinction itself has proven itself for millions upon millions of years to be a common aspect of animal existence. Indeed, it is currently estimated that “more than 99 percent of all organisms that have ever lived on Earth are extinct” (Greshko). Humans may be “the ancestors...who knew the apocalypse was coming,” but if the record of this planet is anything to go by it’s that Apocalypse would come, one after another, without any of our input (Murphy 17). Extinction, just as much as diversification, is a part of nature.

That is, the “unique” quality of today’s ongoing mass extinction may as such not be particularly unique. Indeed, studies of deep time have revealed that humans are not the only species (if we are to conceive of ourselves as such) whose activities have had major, lethal, and transformative ramifications for Earthly life. The Cambrian Explosion (a “rapid diversification of animal species in the early Cambrian...541 to 515 million years ago”) and the accompanying mass extinction of the preceding Ediacaran period’s life forms, for example, was likely significantly triggered by the “so-called penis worms...which churned through the primeval seafloor and ruined the [distinctly un-burrowed] Ediacaran habitat” (Smith and Harper; Brannen 19). The two Great Oxidation Events of 1.5 billion years and 700 million years ago respectively, which resulted in “widespread oxygenic photosynthesis, and, subsequently, oxygen-breathing organisms from which descended diverse multicelled and complex life,” was likewise brought about through the activity of cyanobacteria (Blaustein 189). In so doing they both created an atmosphere that made our kind of life possible, but also led to the extinction of many other life forms, as “oxygen is toxic for anaerobic organisms” (Blaustein 192). In this chaos of annihilation and abundance, the planet “has survived more than four billion wringing, trying, life-demolishing years, those five [known] mass extinctions, meteorites and volcanoes and diseases and famines and wars, and still life carries on. The world has been destroyed and remade again and again”; even with all the human and nonhuman agony and death resulting from our own acts of destruction, we might then simply consider ourselves “perched on the edge of another transition” (Smith 520).

So it could be that even in our acts of prompting another mass extinction that humans prove their “animal” nature once again. Yet when the human animal considers what may define the post-apocalypse(s) planet, we are driven to ask: “transition to what?” Just considering the animals, “the world...has been a wild one, featuring everything from dinosaur-sized hornless rhinoceroses to godlike 60-foot megalodon sharks” (Brannen 222). But the nature of the Anthropocene, especially as the monoculturalization demanded by colonial-capitalism became a globalized phenomenon, has been shaped so thoroughly and destructively by human activity that today’s escalating mass extinction has been predicted “by some to remove between one-third and two-thirds of all living species” (Tony Hallam 243). And this estimate is assuming we manage to avoid nuclear war, something that is in no way guaranteed. With so many existential uncertainties that cannot be pinned completely on nonhuman forces, and with human activity now influencing virtually every part of the planet, the increasingly common belief that we are bringing about the death of nature is an understandable one. Yet considering nothing less than

the history of mass extinctions and the fecundity that followed, I argue again, as I argued at the beginning of my last chapter on *Lively Catastrophe*, that these assumptions of nature's absolute demise are driven by a desire for some sort of permanent conclusion for which humans need not ultimately bear any blame. In contrast, the only conclusion offered by the cataclysmically animated events on planet Earth is that there *is* no final conclusion for life, not until this planet's last microbe dies. And this is a situation that can be uniquely recognized by the human animal, the only creature (as far as we are aware) among life's teeming swarms capable of comprehending the long-term consequences of its actions. What a privilege. What a pain.

To conclude in the face of the impossibility of conclusion, then, I state again that animal narratives have been a vital component in shaping how humans have interacted with other species and among ourselves. Yet just as these narratives have been *deliberately* utilized to support specific biopolitical agendas, so the realization of how we think of animals is open to change should do away with two powerful assumptions: the first, that all creaturely life can be summarized in discussions about "the animal"; the second, that our own actions are ultimately guided by nothing more than blind, "bestly" instinct. In previous centuries leading up to our contemporary crisis, humanity was intentionally defined by an absolute separation from "animal" life in which humans alone were said to possess emotions, personalities, and reason; in the Anthropocene, "even if only through the 'presence' of ['pure'] nature's increased absence," "we are finally coming to see the larger connectivity in nature" in which humans exist as one animal among many (Murphy 18). This realization itself has been taken up to support biopolitical regimes that were initially propped up through the assumed separation of human and animal life, with "the human" now frequently accepted as another "animal" component in "the ideologies and frameworks according to which some forms of life are enabled to thrive while others are oppressed and destroyed" (Gruen 7). Yet it is the conceit of my analysis of the *Lively Catastrophe Genre*—which I composed in an attempt to bridge the seemingly untenable definitions of humans as apart from/a part of nature—that it is *as* animals whose "natures" allow us to envision both short and long-term consequence through which we are capable of (wonder of wonders!) altering our behavior accordingly. It is this "animal" capacity for change in the face of altering environmental challenges, which every species possesses to some degree, which may yet allow us to maintain the kind of biosphere, the kind of multispecies relationships, necessary for species *Homo sapiens* to both survive and thrive. As animals, our basic biological beings require food, water, an oxygenated atmosphere, and global temperatures that allow our bodies to stay within 98.6 degrees F, all of which we must get from "nature," none of which we can completely provide for ourselves. As animals aware of what consequences our actions bear, we are and will always be a species capable of destroying or encouraging the kinds of environments that permits our kind of life to both fulfill the basic requirements for survival, and even potentially to live well. Humankind may have started on the current omniscidal path "because nature seemed like an overwhelming, unexplainable threat to our existence, the ultimate Other" (Murphy 18). Placing ourselves back within nature has come with its own terrors sparked by an ever-growing recognition of our absolute animal fragility. Yet it is through the human capacity to comprehend that "we need to manage our own actions to sustain ourselves in nature" through which human culture might yet change in the understanding that there is nothing more rational than to act with love towards life in all its fragile, terrifying, wondrous, and absolutely necessary swarms (18).

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