

**When Flesh Becomes Meat:**  
**Encountering Meaty Bodies in Contemporary Culture**

A Thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

**2015**

**Rosemary Deller**  
**School of Arts, Languages and Cultures**

## Table of Contents

<b>List of Figures .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Declaration .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Copyright Statement .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>9</b>
 <b>Introduction: When Flesh Becomes Meat: Encountering Meaty Bodies in</b>	
<b>Contemporary Culture .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Following the Animal .....	15
Thinking with Ambivalence .....	22
Staging the Carnal Encounter .....	33
 <b>Chapter One: Wearing Your Meat on Your Sleeve: Textures of Disavowal in</b>	
<b>Pinar Yolaçan's <i>Perishables</i> .....</b>	<b>37</b>
Surfacing Whiteness .....	39
Exposing the Seams .....	44
Abject Folds and Taboo Flesh .....	51
Touching Vulnerability .....	58
Wearing Death, Bearing Death .....	65
 <b>Chapter Two: Ersatz Muscularity and Spectacular Wounding in Zhang Huan's</b>	
<b><i>My New York</i> .....</b>	<b>68</b>
Ersatz Muscularity .....	70
Fortification/Mortification .....	78
Resemblance and Menace .....	90
Inappropriate Objects .....	98
 <b>Chapter Three: Writing Sex in a 'Forest of Meat': Alina Reyes's</b>	
<b><i>The Butcher</i> .....</b>	<b>100</b>
Incendiary Speech .....	101
Exhausting Flesh .....	109
'Pure Atom-Sex' .....	115
'On-All-Fours' .....	119
Desiring Meat .....	127

<b>Chapter Four: The Masquerade of Meat in Deborah Levy’s <i>Diary of a Steak</i></b>	<b>130</b>
Articulating Mimicry .....	131
The Masquerade of Meat .....	139
Struggling to be Human .....	150
Insistent Opacity .....	159
 <b>Chapter Five: The Ethics of the Strain in Matthew Herbert’s <i>One Pig</i></b>	 <b>161</b>
Meat Voices .....	162
The Cry of Meat .....	171
Porcine Spectrality and the ‘Near-Inaudible’ .....	181
Effortful Straining .....	186
 <b>Chapter Six: Animating Meat in Kira O’Reilly’s <i>inthewrongplaceness</i></b>	 <b>188</b>
Animating Meat .....	190
Bio-Art Encounters and Aesthetics of Liveliness .....	195
Necromantic Choreography .....	200
Disquieting Intimacies .....	206
‘Boomeranged’ Animation .....	210
Pausing and Stuttering .....	218
 <b>Chapter Seven: ‘Every Animal is Made Out of Meat’: Visceral Vitality and Carnal Equivalence in <i>Beasts of the Southern Wild</i></b>	 <b>220</b>
‘Wondrous Survival’ .....	221
‘The Buffet of the Universe’: Carnal Ontologies .....	228
‘Beasting It’: Carnal Trophies .....	233
Maternal Dreamscapes and the Carnal Souvenir .....	239
Living On and Living Otherwise .....	249
 <b>Conclusion: Raw Promise: Beyond Nourishment and Trophy</b>	 <b>254</b>
 <b>Bibliography</b>	 <b>271</b>
 <b><u>Word Count: 79,998</u></b>	

## List Of Figures

<b>Figure 1:</b> ‘Untitled’ from <i>Perishables</i> series. 40" x 32 3/8" C-Print (2003). Photograph and Copyright: Pinar Yolaçan .....	39
<b>Figure 2:</b> ‘Untitled’ from <i>Perishables</i> series. 32 x 40" C-Print (2002). Photograph and Copyright: Pinar Yolaçan .....	43
<b>Figure 3:</b> <i>Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic</i> (1987). Photograph: Jana Sterbak .....	46
<b>Figure 4:</b> ‘Untitled’ from <i>Maria</i> series. 40 x 30" C-print (2007). Photograph: Pinar Yolaçan and Rivington Arms, New York .....	49
<b>Figure 5:</b> <i>My New York</i> . Performance, Whitney Museum, New York (2002). Photograph: Zhang Huan .....	70
<b>Figure 6:</b> <i>12m<sup>2</sup></i> . Performance, Beijing, China (1994). Photograph: Zhang Huan .....	72
<b>Figure 7:</b> William Pope. L. <i>The Great White Way</i> (2002). Photograph: Pruznick/Grey .....	76
<b>Figure 8:</b> <i>My New York</i> . Performance, Whitney Museum, New York (2002). Photograph: Zhang Huan .....	79
<b>Figure 9:</b> <i>1/2</i> . Beijing, China (1998). Photograph: Zhang Huan.....	87
<b>Figure 10:</b> <i>Homeland</i> . China (2001). Photograph: Zhang Huan.....	87
<b>Figure 11:</b> <i>inthewrongplaceness</i> (2004–09). Collaboration #5, London (2005). Photograph: Kira O’Reilly and Manuel Vason .....	202
<b>Figure 12:</b> <i>inthewrongplaceness</i> (2004–09). <i>sk-interfaces: Exploding Borders — Creating Membrances in Art, Technology and Society</i> , Casino Luxembourg (2009). Photograph: Axel Heise .....	206



<b>Figure 13:</b> Caterpillars squirming on a leaf offer a moment of contracted vision. <i>Beasts of the Southern Wild</i> (Zeitlin, 2012) .....	225
<b>Figure 14:</b> ‘Every animal is made out of meat’. Hushpuppy gazes down at a visceral, squirming mass of insects. <i>Beasts of the Southern Wild</i> (Zeitlin, 2012).....	228
<b>Figure 15:</b> The style of a tattoo on the thigh of Miss Bathsheba positions the aurochs as symbols of a primeval threat. <i>Beasts of the Southern Wild</i> (Zeitlin, 2012) .....	231
<b>Figure 16:</b> The pose of Hushpuppy underscores meat as a trophy. <i>Beasts of the Southern Wild</i> (Zeitlin, 2012) .....	236
<b>Figure 17:</b> The blood of the kill splashes onto the mother in this primal scene, giving an eroticised tenor to the spectacle of animal death. <i>Beasts of the Southern Wild</i> (Zeitlin, 2012) .....	241
<b>Figure 18:</b> A close-up of skin being cut from flesh emphasises the gator’s ‘magic’ <i>Beasts of the Southern Wild</i> (Zeitlin, 2012) .....	245
<b>Figure 19:</b> ‘You’re my friend, kind of’. Hushpuppy engages in a tentatively peaceful encounter with the aurochs. <i>Beasts of the Southern Wild</i> (Zeitlin, 2012) .....	247

**Abstract.** Being treated as a piece of meat has long been an issue around which feminist concerns regarding the representation of women and practices of cultural consumption coalesce. However, as the Humanities undergo a paradigm shift away from intrinsically privileging the human subject, this demands new consideration of how cultural figurations of meat can work to challenge the terms of the species border. This thesis offers close readings of contemporary film, literature, visual art, music and live performance produced between the late 1980s and the present day that stage carnal encounters with meat. I unite these figurations under the term ‘meaty bodies’, exploring how they question the supposedly self-evident line between the flesh that we are and the flesh that we may eat. Situating its theoretical approach within the tension between psychoanalytic and cultural theories of taboo and abjection and emerging ‘new materialist’ conceptualisations of matter, this thesis contributes to the project of disrupting the primacy of ‘the human’ and the workings of the species divide.

The thesis begins by examining three cultural productions that humanise meat by using it to speak to themes of vulnerability, trauma and sexual desire respectively. The photographic series *Perishables* (Yolaçan, 2002–04), the live art performance *My New York* (Zhang, 2002) and the pornographic novella *The Butcher* (Reyes, 1988) utilise meat to speak to issues surrounding human embodiment. However, I suggest that this typically decouples meat from the animal body from which it derives. The thesis subsequently turns to four cultural productions that more directly engage with the violence inherent in the naturalisation of meat as animal body. Analysing the experimental text *Diary of a Steak* (Levy, 1997), the concept album *One Pig* (Herbert, 2011), the live art performance *inthewrongplaceness* (O’Reilly, 2004–09) and the feature film *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (Zeitlin, 2012), the thesis positions these cultural productions as a challenge to the species border through their attentiveness to contemporary issues surrounding meat consumption and production, including discussion of ‘meat panics’ such as the 1980s/1990s BSE crisis, the development of tissue-cultured meat and impending food scarcity.

These close readings show that what I term a ‘carnal equivalence’ between human and animal flesh can be a powerful means of questioning the terms of the species border. Yet, in rendering their encounters with meat frequently difficult and strained, these cultural productions stage and generate ambivalence as integral to our relations with meat consumption and production in the contemporary moment. The thesis suggests that this uncertainty is indicative of a wider impasse within the Humanities, as the field seeks to decentralise ‘the human’ and the discourses that are invested in the continued dominance of this category, yet is still shaped by attachments and anxieties that render this move more difficult than may otherwise be supposed.

## **DECLARATION**

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

## COPYRIGHT STATEMENT

The author of this thesis (including any appendices and/or schedules to this thesis) owns certain copyright or related rights in it (the “Copyright”) and s/he has given The University of Manchester certain rights to use such Copyright, including for administrative purposes.

Copies of this thesis, either in full or in extracts and whether in hard or electronic copy, may be made **only** in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended) and regulations issued under it or, where appropriate, in accordance with licensing agreements which the University has from time to time. This page must form part of any such copies made.

The ownership of certain Copyright, patents, designs, trade marks and other intellectual property (the “Intellectual Property”) and any reproductions of copyright works in the thesis, for example graphs and tables (“Reproductions”), which may be described in this thesis, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without the prior written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions.

Further information on the conditions under which disclosure, publication and commercialisation of this thesis, the Copyright and any Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions described in it may take place is available in the University IP Policy (see <http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=487>), in any relevant Thesis restriction declarations deposited in the University Library, The University Library’s regulations (see <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/library/aboutus/regulations>) and in The University’s policy on Presentation of Theses.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by thanking the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the University of Manchester. Their funding enabled me to undertake this thesis.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Jackie Stacey. Her fierce intelligence and willingness to undertake such attentive readings (and re-readings) of my work have been invaluable, encouraging me to push my thinking into unexpected spheres. Thank you for the unparalleled encouragement, generosity and support. I would also like to thank my second supervisor, Daniela Caselli, for incisive and imaginative observations that provided inspiration at crucial moments. Thank you also to my pastoral supervisor, Monica Pearl, who brought a spirit of honesty, generosity and wit to every panel meeting (as well as much appreciated New Yorker articles).

The commute between Newcastle and Manchester may have been lengthy, but I have been greatly buoyed, supported, entertained and inspired by the PhD community at the University of Manchester. I would especially like to thank Rebecca Pohl, Jane Stedman and Chris Vardy for their intelligent insights, wit and shared ability to endure a good moan. Particular thanks and gratitude must also go to Clara Bradbury-Rance, an incomparable friend, confidante and colleague. Your kindness, patience, humour and generous spirit have made you the perfect PhD companion throughout the last four years.

Outside of the Manchester academic community, I would like to thank Kyle Grayson and Stacy Gillis, who both encouraged me on the path towards this PhD study during my time at Newcastle University. I would also like to thank a number of former students of Central European University who brought gender theory to life, in particular Alexa Athelstan, Hwa Yi Xing, Kate Mottola and Ajay Watson. I would like to thank Michele Aaron for providing me with beneficial and perceptive comments on an earlier version of Chapter One. Thank you also to Kamillea Aghtan, Karin Sellberg and Lena Wånggren for their encouraging response to a version of Chapter Six. Many thanks to Michael O'Rourke for his witty and insightful reflections on the worlds of flesh and meat. I would also like to thank the artists Pinar Yolaçan and Kira O'Reilly, who provided me with images of their work. I am greatly appreciative of their generosity.

Finally, I must thank my family and friends who have given me inestimable support throughout these PhD studies. Thank you to Adam, who encouraged me to pursue a PhD at Manchester University. Thank you to Andrew for his support leading up to the viva examination. I would especially like to thank Cat, Eloise, Steph, my brother, David, and my parents. Despite us mostly living at opposite ends of the country, you have shown me constant love, support and kindness – thank you.

## Introduction

### When Flesh Becomes Meat:

### Encountering Meaty Bodies in Contemporary Culture

Well, of course, we are meat, we are potential carcasses. If I go into a butcher's shop,

I always think it's surprising that I wasn't there instead of the animal.<sup>1</sup>

Francis Bacon

A potential cross-species 'zone of *indiscernibility or undecidability*', meat demands intercorporeal intimacies, some valued, others disavowed, between humans and animals.<sup>2</sup> Yet, naturalised as other-than-human flesh, meat is also one of the prime examples of 'speciesism', which functions through 'the "noncriminal putting to death" of other animals based solely on their species'.<sup>3</sup> As a result, it is one of the most pressing subjects through which to consider the violence generated by the species border. However, the diverse figurations of meat across contemporary cultural productions remain largely unexamined within the converging fields of feminist theory and critical human/animal studies. As the Humanities evidence a growing commitment to decentralising the category of the human, this thesis offers close readings of visual art, literature, film, music and live performance produced between the late 1980s and the present day that stage encounters with what I term 'meaty bodies'. While 'texts of meat' have been defined as those that encourage and

---

<sup>1</sup> David Sylvester, 'Great Interviews of the Twentieth Century: "One Continuous Accident Mounting on Top of Another"', *Guardian*, (13 September 2007)  
<<http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2007/sep/13/greatinterviews>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>2</sup> Gilles Deleuze uses this phrase to describe the 'meaty' triptychs of the painter Francis Bacon in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. by Daniel W. Smith (New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, The Discourse of Species and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 7.

participate in a prevailing ideological investment in the naturalness of meat eating, this thesis turns to ‘carnal encounters’ that utilise meat in ways that question the distinction between human and animal flesh.<sup>4</sup>

Exploring the ‘meaty body’ poses an immediate question as to the exact definitional limits of ‘meat’. In English, the word originally referred to any food used for nourishment, before gradually narrowing into its more conventional definition as consumable animal flesh ‘without life, skin, or entrails’.<sup>5</sup> Yet even here meat remains a non-specific term due to the culturally specific norms that determine the line between the edible and the inedible and circumscribe the ‘animal-flesh hierarchies’ that separate ‘*filet mignon* and chicken feet’.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, meat does not solely denote the fate of those bodies which are daily transformed en masse into consumable goods in the slaughterhouse (what we might think of as the *animalised* position, and the most ‘literal’ definition of meat). A slippery, shifting word, meat can also be used as a metonym for bodies that have been figuratively objectified, fragmented and rendered consumable (typically viewed as a *feminised* position); or, alternatively, it can function as a metaphor for bodies that are solid, muscly and substantial (what can be thought of as a *masculinised* position).<sup>7</sup> Meat therefore comes to oscillate, as in Elisabeth Bronfen’s account of aesthetic figurations of the corpse, ‘between the excessively tropic and a non-semiotic materiality’.<sup>8</sup> This makes the precise parameters of the meaty body somewhat blurred, potentially referring to the meat

---

<sup>4</sup> Carol Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist Vegetarian Theory* (New York and London: Continuum, 2010 [1990]), p. 26.

<sup>5</sup> Paula Young Lee, ‘Introduction: Housing Slaughter’ in *Meat, Modernity and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse*, ed. by Young Lee (Lebanon: University of New Hampshire Press, 2008), pp. 1–9 (p. 4). This linguistic shift is similarly true in French as *viande* (meat) originally referred to all food (‘all that is used for life’): Noémie Vialles, *Animal to Edible*, trans. by J. A. Underwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Young Lee, ‘Conclusion: Why Look at Slaughterhouses?’ in *Meat, Modernity*, ed. by Young Lee, pp. 237–43 (p. 240).

<sup>7</sup> See also Nick Fiddes, *Meat: A Natural Symbol* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 154.

<sup>8</sup> Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), p. xi.

that one might eat, but also muscly bodies — bodybuilders, for example — as well as that which has been transformed into the pleasurable object of the gaze.

While this thesis focuses on contemporary literature, film, visual art, music and live performance that utilises meat that could, at least hypothetically, turn up on the dinner plate, it acknowledges the mobility of the term by contending that what we might think of as a ‘literal’ definition of meat is always enfolded with the figurative. This approach is particularly inspired by Nicole Shukin’s *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (2009), which is structured around a committed attentiveness to the dual connotations of ‘rendering’. Since rendering refers to both ‘the industrial boiling down and recycling of animal remains’ and ‘the production of a mimetic copy in the fields of image-making and other media’, Shukin utilises this ‘double entendre’ to argue that animals always circulate ‘in profoundly contradictory semiotic and material currencies’.<sup>9</sup> Meat is a paradigmatic example of this schema; as Louis-Sébastien Mercier observed after witnessing slaughter in the Parisian abattoir La Villette, ‘the limbs cut apart by the knife will be distributed in pieces and the animal is at once *sign* and *product*’ (emphasis mine).<sup>10</sup> Since the ‘literal’ materiality of meat is always enfolded with its concurrent circulation as sign, one must work to ‘continuously interimplicate the double senses of rendering’.<sup>11</sup> With meat travelling into unexpected spheres both rhetorically and materially, this thesis traces figurations of meatiness in their various permutations across selected cultural sites. However, the transformation enfolded in the term ‘rendering’ also places emphasis on the figuration of the movement from flesh to meat (and perhaps vice versa), prompting reflection on what exactly is seen to be changed by this process.

---

<sup>9</sup> Nicole Shukin, *Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), pp. 20 and 21.

<sup>10</sup> Louis-Sébastien Mercier quoted in Kyn Claflin, ‘La Villette: City of Blood (1867–1914)’, in *Meat, Modernity*, ed. by Young Lee, pp. 27–45 (p. 34).

<sup>11</sup> Shukin, p. 27.



While the movement from flesh to meat is a corporeal process, marked by a violent shift from wholeness into parts, this thesis positions itself in dialogue with feminist work that attends to questions of embodiment without reifying an abstract notion of ‘the body’ as self-evident, whole or unified.<sup>12</sup> As explorations of the structure of abjection and the category of the grotesque indicate how idealised understandings of embodiment have typically displaced permeability, vulnerability and mortality onto the feminine, ‘meatiness’ has at times been implicated in a similar gesture.<sup>13</sup> One can cite the tendency of cyberpunk writers in the 1980s and 1990s to use meat as a somewhat tongue-in-cheek derogatory term for the ‘unplugged’ body: that is, the fragile, fleshy entity to be evacuated through growing immersion in cyber-technologies.<sup>14</sup> Although characterised by N. Katherine Hayles as indicative of the indelible link between post-humanism and the pursuit of disembodiment, this perspective has more recently been deemed ‘trans-humanist’ by Cary Wolfe: that is, an intensification of the humanist belief in the possibility of continual human progress and eventual transcendence.<sup>15</sup>

Out of a related concern for the implications of a desire to ‘beat the meat’ — the wish to hold meatiness apart from human embodiment — I considered Gunther von Hagens’s controversial *Body Worlds* exhibition in my 2008 MA thesis,

---

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), Margrit Shildrick, *Embodying the Monster: Encounters with the Vulnerable Self* (London: Sage, 2002); and Shildrick, *Leaky Bodies and Boundaries: Feminism, Postmodernism and (Bio)Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) and Mary Russo, *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, William Gibson’s cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer* (London: Harper-Collins, 1993). For more on this issue, see David Bell, ‘Meat and Metal’, in *The Subcultures Reader*, ed. by Ken Gelder (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 555–63; Sara Cohen Shabot, ‘Grotesque Bodies: A Response to Disembodied Cyborgs’, *Journal of Gender Studies*, 15:3 (2006), 223–35; Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 165–178; and Claudia Springer, *Electronic Eros: Bodies and Desire in the Post-Industrial Age* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> See N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999) and Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

subsequently published in the journal *Feminist Theory* in 2011.<sup>16</sup> Struck by the extent to which the dissected, plastinated cadavers were regularly compared to meat by journalists and visitors, I addressed how this label functioned as a criticism of the exhibition, encompassing widespread concerns regarding the sourcing of the bodies and its provocative strategies of display. Yet I contended that the ascription of ‘meatiness’ to *Body Worlds* also alluded to its capacity to encourage viewers to engage with their own corporeality. Drawing upon contemporary theories of consumption that posit it as a process that can break down boundaries between bodies, I argued that the exhibition constructed encounters with the meatiness of embodiment, its openness, frailty and vulnerability, thereby resisting the temptation to fillet (human) bodies of these facets of embodied life.<sup>17</sup>

This PhD thesis develops out of my prior examination of one particular meaty body, the dissected cadaver of *Body Worlds*, to offer a wide-reaching discussion of visual art, film, live performance, music and literature that present figurations of meatiness in the contemporary moment. Yet, this thesis can also be seen as a crucial divergence from the line of argumentation pursued by the MA. ‘Dead Meat: Feeding at the Anatomy Table of Gunther von Hagens’ *Body Worlds*’ was driven by a desire to claim meatiness as a necessary aspect of embodiment, to even embrace it as a synonym for the viscera that makes up the lived body. However, the vehemence with which I pursued this line was accompanied by a palpable undercurrent of ambivalence. Could meatiness really be celebrated as an aspect of embodiment

---

<sup>16</sup> Rosemary Deller, ‘Dead Meat: Feeding at the Anatomy Table of Gunther von Hagens’ *Body Worlds*’, *Feminist Theory*, 12:3 (2011), 241–61. The phrase ‘beating the meat’ originates from Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, p. 170. In her critique of Jean Baudrillard, she plays with the sexual connotations of the phrase as slang for masturbation in arguing that the pursuit of transcendence has an eroticised allure.

<sup>17</sup> See Christian Coff, *A Taste for Ethics: An Ethics of Food Consumption* (Berlin: Springer, 2006); Daniel Cottom, *Cannibals and Philosophers: Bodies of Enlightenment* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 2001); and Elspeth Probyn, *Carnal Appetites: Foodsexidentities* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

when, as Carol Adams argues, ‘no one can really feel like a piece of meat because meat by definition is violently deprived of all feeling’?<sup>18</sup> Is there not a fundamental contradiction inherent in the notion of the ‘meaty body’ when meat could be understood as a body on the verge of disintegration, indeed, perhaps no longer a body at all? My uncertainty as to how to confront these questions with regards to *Body Worlds*, combined with the unavoidable issues concerning the exhibition’s procurement of bodies, became most evident in the concluding paragraph of the MA thesis in which I intimated a lingering doubt about the capacity to simply embrace meatiness as a facet of embodied life. While this seemed a disappointing failure of nerve or execution, it was the uncertainty that became one of the most generative legacies. Rather than simply resolve this doubt or push it out of view, this PhD thesis takes my hesitation as the starting point for its intervention to ask how cultural productions work with, stage and negotiate ambivalence towards meat in the contemporary moment.

### **Following the Animal**

That even the most resolutely carnivorous imagination must work to forge a ‘truce’ with meat has become particularly apparent as we appear to be at a crossroads when it comes to any overarching consensus regarding industrial meat production and consumption. In recent years, there has been a notable proliferation of exposés of the workings of the meat industry, accompanied by regular media articles in newspapers and magazines debating whether consumers should reduce or even turn away from meat eating altogether. These critiques take myriad forms and advocate different (although far from mutually exclusive) positions, ranging from vegetarian and vegan

---

<sup>18</sup> Adams, *Sexual Politics*, p. 67.

arguments, concerns about the environmental costs of the meat industry to health discourses that emphasise the potential benefits of a low meat or meat-free diet.<sup>19</sup> The cyclical outbreak of zoonotic diseases that can be transmitted between human and animal bodies, most notably the 1980s/1990s spread of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) or ‘mad cow disease’, has also heightened anxieties about the transparency of meat production. This thesis therefore focuses on carnal encounters produced between the late 1980s and the present day as a means of reflecting on the particular frictions surrounding meat production and consumption in the contemporary moment.

This time frame should not obscure the degree to which concerns about meat production have a long history, many originating in the mechanisation and industrialisation of animal slaughter in the nineteenth century. In North America and Western Europe, this period marked a fundamental shift in government attitudes towards meat production, largely driven by the emergence of public health as a discourse that fuelled the ‘civilisation’ of urban space. Previously animal slaughter had been integral to the sensory experience of the city; animals were driven through and killed on the streets, rendering animal slaughter an ocular, sonic and olfactory element of urban life. In the nineteenth century, animal slaughter began to be shifted to the outskirts of towns as vast, industrial-scale public abattoirs replaced private slaughterhouses.<sup>20</sup> While this process was driven by public health movements that demanded the regular inspection of the quality and health of meat, institutional

---

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Damian Carrington, ‘Eating Less Meat Essential to Curb Climate Change, Says Report’, *Guardian*, (3 December 2014) <<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/dec/03/eating-less-meat-curb-climate-change>> [accessed 26 June 2015]; Hattie Ellis, *Planet Chicken: The Shameful Story of the Bird on Your Plate* (London: Sceptre, 2007); and Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals* (London: Penguin Books, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> The French term ‘abattoir’ originates from 1806, emerging in tandem with Napoleon’s reorganisation of animal slaughter. In parallel, the word *tueurs* for slaughterers, meaning ‘killers’, shifted to the more euphemistic *abattage*, a forestry term meaning ‘to fell’: see Vialles, pp. 15 and xvi. For more detail on the specifics of this transformation in France, Germany, the UK, the USA and Mexico, see *Meat, Modernity*, ed. by Young Lee.

changes to the abattoir led to the physical and sensual exile that remains the paradigm for the modern slaughterhouse.

Attending to these histories indicates that contemporary anxieties about the quality of supermarket meat are far from new; rather, they are intertwined with the industrialisation of meat production. The 2013 furore over the European horsemeat scandal, in which products labelled as beef were found to be constituted from horse flesh, finds an echo in the outrage provoked by Upton Sinclair's earlier exposure of the workings of the Chicago stockyards in his influential novel *The Jungle* (1906), which revealed that consumers were being sold diseased and ersatz meat.<sup>21</sup> Sinclair's use of the 'slaughter spectacle' wields enduring stylistic influence over contemporary literary reflections on the meat industry, such as the non-fiction work *Fast Food Nation* (Schlosser, 2002).<sup>22</sup> Yet *The Jungle* also indicates that concerns about meat production and consumption mark a space of intensified rather than emergent anxieties that are inherent within the contradictory principles that shaped the emergence of industrialised meat. The carnal encounters explored in this thesis are not to be seen as simply symptomatic of a contemporary 'Fleischgeist'—a term used to describe the present preoccupation with meat. Rather, they participate in and shape a 'growing trend in meat consciousness' characterised by intensified debates over meat production and consumption.<sup>23</sup>

While meat occupies a prominent space in recent online and print media, it is also a timely subject of academic enquiry due to the rise of what I term 'critical

---

<sup>21</sup> Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (New York: Signet Classics, 2001 [1906]).

<sup>22</sup> See Susan McHugh, *Animal Stories: Narrating Across Species Lines* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. 174. See also Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: What the All-American Meal is Doing to the World* (New York: Penguin, 2002).

<sup>23</sup> Sasha Wizansky and Amy Standen, 'Hello from Meatpaper', *Meatpaper*, (2007) <[http://www.meatpaper.com/articles/2007/1217\\_edletter.html](http://www.meatpaper.com/articles/2007/1217_edletter.html)> [accessed 26 June 2015].

human/animal studies’.<sup>24</sup> Comprised of a diverse body of theorists working across multiple disciplines, critical human/animal studies contribute to post-humanist enquiry by focusing attention on the position of ‘the animal’ as the foundational otherness that is the constitutive outside of ‘the human’. Understanding the animal as the ‘limit case for theories of otherness, difference and power’, critical human/animal studies has tended to move beyond questions of animal advocacy and rights discourses that would seek to bring the animal across the species border to share in the elevated status of the human.<sup>25</sup> Instead, it has worked to reframe the entire question of the species boundary and with it, the foundations of the human subject as it has been repeatedly secured. Through such work, the animal — a term described by Jacques Derrida as a fictitiously and violently homogenising category — necessarily unravels from indicating a deceptively neat ‘unilinear and indivisible line between two edges, Man and Animal’, into a multiplicity that can only be traced through the specificities of its myriad permutations.<sup>26</sup> This commitment to following the animal through multiplicity means that while some theorists focus intently on the particular histories through which relations with certain animals have been forged, no single creature in itself offers the ideal meeting point through which one can simply resolve the violence and inequalities that have emerged through, and continue to

---

<sup>24</sup> My use of ‘critical human/animal studies’ differs from the three common terms used to denote this diffuse field: namely, animal studies, critical animal studies and human-animal studies. While these terms diverge and intersect in a number of ways, ‘critical animal studies’ emerged in the early 2000s as a means of stressing the need to consider the theoretical questions posed by animals *and* attend to their everyday subjection and exploitation. Dawne McCance suggests that the term ‘critical’ not only denotes the interrogation of received conceptual frameworks regarding cross-species relations, but also imbues this practice with a necessary sense of urgency: *Critical Animal Studies: An Introduction* (Albany, NJ: SUNY Press, 2013), pp. 4–5. While critical animal studies does attend to how speciesism can justify violence and unequal treatment between humans, I use the term ‘critical human/animal studies’. Not only does this make attentiveness to the violences within *and* beyond the human explicit as part of the field, but it also allows for a degree of indeterminacy concerning the dividing lines between the categories of ‘the human’ and ‘the animal’ in keeping with the questions posed by this PhD thesis.

<sup>25</sup> Kari Weil, ‘A Report on the Animal Turn’, *differences*, 21:2 (2010), 1–23 (p. 3).

<sup>26</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. and ed. by Marie-Louise Millot (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 31.

shape, the notion of species difference.<sup>27</sup> The desired ends of studying animals are similarly diverse, yet tend to orientate around a staunch belief that to question the primacy afforded the human subject is to dramatically rethink questions of ethics, power and difference.

In *Object Lessons*, Robyn Wiegman proposes the notion of the ‘field imaginary’ to describe the objects, methods, attachments and interpretative vocabularies through which one indicates belonging in a field of identity knowledge production.<sup>28</sup> The tensions inherent in claiming to ‘speak for’ the animal make critical human/animal studies a field perhaps driven instead by ethical *disidentification* in positing a crucial difference between oneself and one’s objects of study. Wiegman’s references to the ‘psychic life’ of the field and the ‘disciplinary unconscious’ furthermore pose intriguing questions regarding the capacity to push critical thinking by humans beyond a reiteration of the primacy of the human subject. Nonetheless, critical human/animal studies is driven by the same hope that ‘our critical practice will be adequate to the political commitments that inspire it’.<sup>29</sup> Since the ‘field imaginary’ of critical human/animal studies is consequently shaped around a wish to challenge the naturalised hierarchy through which animals are subjugated by humans, then meat is ‘one of the most problematic sites that must be addressed in any transformed vision of posthuman companion species’.<sup>30</sup> The transformation of animal bodies into meat on a global industrialised scale is one of the most violent ways by which humans maintain their position above animals by reducing the latter

---

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Donna Haraway’s study of dogs in *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), as well as the *Animal* series (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004–09), featuring books on a variety of creatures including pigeons, hyenas, rats, flies and sharks.

<sup>28</sup> Robyn Wiegman, *Object Lessons* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), p. 15. Her use of ‘field imaginary’ is inspired by Donald Pease, ‘New Americanists: Revisionist Interventions into the Canon’, *boundary 2*, 17:1 (1990), 1–37.

<sup>29</sup> Wiegman, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Sherryl Vint, *Animal Alterity and the Question of the Animal* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), p. 44.

to consumable bodies. Sherryl Vint's description of meat as 'the material basis for our culture' positions the naturalisation of animals as food as integral to the 'becoming human' of humanity.<sup>31</sup> As Derrida puts it, 'there is therefore neither socialization, political constitution, nor politics without the principle of the domestication of the wild animal. [...] Politics supposes livestock.'<sup>32</sup> Here the 'becoming-livestock' (*devenir-bétail*) of the animal is the necessary other to the formation of the human 'political animal' and kinship models. While the production of meat is therefore seen to secure the species border, there remains the lurking knowledge that this is only a naturalised relation, that there is, in other words, no inherent reason why meat is formed of animal rather than human bodies. The frisson that surrounds the notion of the human subject becoming consumable, including the lingering taboo of cannibalism, positions meat eating as a potentially unstable means through which to secure human domination when one recognises the thin, at times barely perceptible, line between human corpse and animal carcass.

It is precisely the capacity for meat to represent a 'shared potential' for human and non-human flesh that has been imaginatively explored in cultural productions that place pressure on the notion that there is anything intrinsically 'animal' to a piece of meat.<sup>33</sup> It is therefore surprising to note that since the publication of Adams's influential work, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist Vegetarian Theory* (originally published in 1990), no further book-length study has specifically focused attention on the ways in which meat has been culturally figured. In this book, Adams positions meat as the convergence of naturalised violence against animals and the sexual objectification of women, constructing an analogy

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Derrida, p. 96.

<sup>33</sup> McHugh, 'Animal Farm's Lessons for Literary (and) Animal Studies', *Humanimalia*, 1:1 (2009), 24–39 (p. 25).



between the dismemberment of animal bodies through butchery and the visual fragmentation of women's bodies into erotic spectacle through the penetrative power of the gaze. This work continues to contribute to critical human/animal studies, having drawn attention to the ways in which categories such as animality and femininity have been historically co-constructed.

More recently, the emergent academic commitment to interrogating speciesism has led to a proliferation of scholarship attending to animals across a variety of artistic media. In the visual arts, this has taken the form of two notable, though far from mutually exclusive, approaches: firstly, the tracking of the 'animal invasion' of the gallery space as artists depict and utilise living and dead animal bodies as part of their work; and secondly, the growing theoretical challenge to the belief that art is an exclusively human endeavour as scholars explore the animality of artistic practice and identify spaces of interspecies creative production.<sup>34</sup> In parallel, scholars have turned their attention to 'literary beasts', including the questions that animality poses for writing, narrative and language.<sup>35</sup> Film studies also address the extent to which 'the ontologies and histories of animal life and the moving image are deeply interlocked'.<sup>36</sup> Recent work has not only sought to trace animals as part of the thematic content of cinema, but also as materially embedded in its technologies, evidenced by the historical formation of celluloid film from gelatin, a product

---

<sup>34</sup> Giovanni Aloï, *Art and Animals* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012), p. xv. See also Steve Baker, *The Postmodern Animal* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000); Ron Broglio, *Surface Encounters: Thinking with Animals and Art* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Grosz, *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics and Art* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2011); and Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, McHugh, *Animal Stories*.

<sup>36</sup> Laura McMahon, 'Introduction: The Screen Animals Dossier', *Screen*, 56:1 (2015), 81–87 (p. 81).

derived from animal slaughter.<sup>37</sup> While aesthetic engagements with meat have served as the discussion point for individual journal articles, book chapters and special issues, since Adams no full-length study has focused solely on contemporary figurations of meat.<sup>38</sup> My thesis therefore locates itself within this gap.

### **Thinking with Ambivalence**

The absence of any prior full-length study of contemporary cultural figurations of meat can partly be explained by the degree to which challenges to the species border in critical human/animal studies have been framed around interspecies intimacy, thinking through new versions of companionship, kinship and cross-species entanglement. As this work stresses the need to find an appropriate register through which to envisage reworked relations between human and non-human life, the status of meat as dead matter presents difficulties for this emphasis upon intimacy. Although the eating of meat blurs bodily boundaries, can one really speak of forging relations with meat, or is meat that which curtails relationality, and is therefore a limit case for critical human/animal studies? I argue that the exploration of meaty bodies provides a means of considering the point at which interspecies encounters based on notions of intimacy and sensual relation can break down as much as flourish. The cultural productions examined in this thesis play with what I term a ‘carnal equivalence’ between human and non-human flesh. However, they also struggle with the promise of the encounter, probing into how one can ‘meet one’s meat’, and the difficulties therein. This thesis focuses on visual artists, writers,

---

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Barbara Creed, *Darwin’s Screens: Evolutionary Aesthetics, Time and Sexual Display in the Cinema* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2009); McMahon, ed., ‘The Screen Animals Dossier’, *Screen*, 56:1 (2015), 81–120; and Anat Pick and Guinevere Naraway, eds, *Screening Nature: Cinema Beyond the Human* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2013).

<sup>38</sup> See two themed issues of *Antennae*: Aloï, ed., ‘The Politics of Meat’, 14 (2010), 1–74 and Aloï, ed., ‘Meet Animal Meat’, 15 (2010), 1–71.

musicians, performers and film-makers who are risking the ‘finest epidermal contact’ with meat in order to question ambivalence towards that which renders us potentially the consumer and the consumed: corpse, carcass, food, human *and* animal.<sup>39</sup>

Since a key theme is the difficulty of finding an appropriate register for intimacy with meat, then it follows that the project is in part engaged with theories that provide an account of such anxieties. Given the breadth of critical human/animal studies, a number of scholars have turned to psychoanalytic texts in order to explore their perceived ‘bestiary’, whether through examining the recurrence of animals in the case studies of Sigmund Freud or by considering how claims about animals have been integral to many psychoanalytic accounts of human subject formation.<sup>40</sup> As a corollary to this animal presence, meat is frequently discussed in a number of texts, including Freud’s *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics* (1919) and Julia Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection* (1982).<sup>41</sup> Both works, which bookend a related (though non-psychoanalytic) cultural study, Mary Douglas’s *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (1966), suggest a fundamental ambivalence regarding meat, stemming precisely from its inability to definitively shore up the boundaries between the human and the animal and between the nutritious and the pollutive.<sup>42</sup> While Walter Benjamin argues that meat consumption serves as the ‘drastic gesture’ by which humans assure themselves of being ‘master’ of animals,

---

<sup>39</sup> Walter Benjamin, ‘One-Way Street’, in *Selected Writings: Volume 1: 1913–1926* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 444–88 (p. 448).

<sup>40</sup> See Maud Ellman, ‘Psychoanalytic Animal’, in *A Concise Companion to Psychoanalysis, Literature and Culture*, ed. by Laura Marcus and Ankhi Mukherjee (Chichester: John Wiley, 2014), pp. 328–50; Kelly Oliver, *Animal Lessons: How They Teach Us to be Human* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); and Nicholas Ray, ‘Interrogating the Human/Animal Relation in Freud’s *Civilization and its Discontents*’, *Humanimalia*, 6:1 (2014), 10–40.

<sup>41</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. by A. A. Brill (London: Routledge, 1919) and Kristeva.

<sup>42</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003 [1966]).

Kristeva's account of abjection suggests that this act is always haunted by the taboo of cannibalism.<sup>43</sup> The point is not to position meat as the exemplar of these accounts. Rather, by working through these theories, this thesis draws out the degree to which meat is implicated in *structures* of taboo and abjection without positing it as their paradigmatic object.

While psychoanalytic and cultural theories of the subject provide one means through which to understand ambivalence towards contact with meat, many critical human/animal studies have viewed the psychoanalytic preoccupation with the human subject as antithetical to the project of following the animal. Criticism of psychoanalytic approaches has been particularly influenced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who notably castigated Freud for reducing animals to figures or metaphors for human traumas and experiences.<sup>44</sup> Much critical human/animal studies work has accordingly turned towards theories that more radically push beyond and challenge human exceptionalism, in particular those associated with the 'return to materiality' narratives that have gained prominence in recent feminist theory by calling for renewed explorations of matter, corporeality and affect.<sup>45</sup>

In her discussion of the 'Episteme of the Affect', Eugenie Brinkema addresses the 'larger reawakening of interest in problematics of embodiment and materiality' as a plural field.<sup>46</sup> Part of this 'reawakening' has been pioneered in the realm of film studies through a re-orientation towards the 'felt visceral, immediate, sensed, embodied' aspects of spectatorship.<sup>47</sup> A number of scholars have pushed

---

<sup>43</sup> See Benjamin, p. 448 and Kristeva.

<sup>44</sup> See Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 2004 [1987]), in particular pp. 30–43.

<sup>45</sup> The phrase 'return to materiality' is inspired by Clare Hemmings's critique of these discourses in *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University, 2011), p. 97.

<sup>46</sup> Eugenie Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2014), p. xi.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

forward reconsiderations of the relationship between film and the viewing body. Vivian Sobchack challenges the tendency to ‘disincarnate’ the spectator by arguing that ‘we see and comprehend and feel films with our entire bodily being’.<sup>48</sup> Laura Marks posits the ‘skin of the film’ as a metaphor for a mode of seeing grounded in ‘haptic visuality’ whereby the embodied tactility provoked by the image creates a sensuous proximity between the viewing eye and the film.<sup>49</sup> Jennifer Barker complements this focus on the relationship between surface, touch and vision through her attentiveness to the ‘fleshy, muscular and visceral’ aspects of spectatorship that allow for both haptic touch and ‘total immersion’.<sup>50</sup> While all three acknowledge that this is never an absolute dissolution of the distance between the spectatorial body and the image (with Marks particularly attributing ethical import to this crucial gap), Sobchack and Barker nonetheless invest in film’s ability to engage the sensuous capacities of our ‘entire bodily being’ and to generate ‘full-bodied openings’.<sup>51</sup>

These considerations of ‘carnal, visceral embeddedness’ as a crucial aspect of film spectatorship can be paralleled with a broader turn towards sensuous scholarship across the Humanities, as reconceptualisations of the parameters of the ‘sensed’ and ‘embodied’ offer a space through which to question the perceived primacy afforded visual analysis.<sup>52</sup> This challenge to ocularcentrism has been pertinent to critical

---

<sup>48</sup> Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, pp. 59 and 63.

<sup>49</sup> Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Trauma, Embodiment and the Senses* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

<sup>50</sup> Jennifer M. Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), pp. 4 and 2.

<sup>51</sup> Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, p. 63 and Barker, p. 146. For a response to this emphasis on touch in cinema, including discussion of Barker, Marks and Sobchack, see McMahon, *Cinema and Contact: The Withdrawal of Touch in Nancy, Bresson, Duras and Denis* (London: Legenda, 2012).

<sup>52</sup> ‘Carnal, visceral embeddedness’ is taken from Barker, p. 144. See, for example, Veit Erlman, ed., *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening and Modernity* (Oxford: Berg, 2004); Bettina Paperburg and Marta Zarzycka, eds, *Essays in Carnal Aesthetics: Transgressive Imagery and Feminist Politics* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013); and Jonathan Sterne, ed., *The Sound Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

human/animal studies, which has suggested that the overvaluation of the visual contributes to the instantiation of a species divide. Since the coming-into-being of the human has been narrated by Freud as engendering the organic repression of other senses including smell, taking account of a ‘more general and not necessarily human bodily sensorium’ can be a powerful means of challenging the anthropocentric tendencies inherent in ocularcentrism.<sup>53</sup>

To encounter meat outside the intimacies of eating can counteract institutional structures, such as the slaughterhouse, that curtail sensual proximity with the process of turning flesh into meat. The carnal encounters articulated across this thesis also challenge the assumption that the aesthetic staging of meat is a ‘predominantly visual experience’.<sup>54</sup> Linked to histories of dissection and its analytical, penetrative modes of knowledge production, ‘meatiness’ has been understood as ‘the moment when what remains hidden to us is opened up’.<sup>55</sup> Since this not only equates carnal encounters with processes of objectification, but also enshrines the meaty body as a site of epistemological revelation, this thesis probes into and complicates the association of meat with visual exposure. Suggesting that expanding discussions beyond the visual realm can reveal how ‘meat has its own frictions that prevent human and physical consumption of the animal’, this thesis engages with multiple senses in dialogue, including touch, taste and sound, as they are implicated in encounters with contemporary meaty bodies.<sup>56</sup>

The ‘Episteme of the Affect’ has not only taken the form of a turn towards the sensual or ‘felt’. An emergent body of ‘new materialist’ thinkers have proclaimed

---

<sup>53</sup> Wolfe, *Animal Rites*, p. 3. See also Freud, *Civilisation and its Discontents*, trans. by David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2002 [1930]), p. 46, n. 1.

<sup>54</sup> Baker, p. 87.

<sup>55</sup> Broglio, *Surface Encounters*, p. 1

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxvii.

the need for a resurgent engagement with ‘the material’.<sup>57</sup> This ‘return story’ is dependent on positioning poststructuralist and postmodernist thought as triumphant forces within preceding feminist theory: so triumphant, in fact, that they have encouraged an overindulgence in the ‘merely cultural’ over ‘real world’ concerns.<sup>58</sup> In order to underscore an insufficiency within existing feminist theory, many new materialists have accused it of having failed to properly account for the fleshiness and lived experience of corporeality. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, for example, state that ‘we are not convinced that they pay sufficient attention to the material efficacy of bodies, or have the theoretical resources to do so’.<sup>59</sup> While such claims can be frustratingly vague — who precisely are the ‘they’ who have ‘failed’ to pay attention? — new materialists stress the dynamic vitality of ‘stuff’, including, although not limited to, the human body, as an apparent riposte to the over-emphasis on the constitutive role of discourse attributed to the so-called ‘linguistic’ or ‘cultural’ turn. Rather than understand bodies through a dialectic of absence/presence in which matter is either unremittingly ‘there’ or suffused with an intractable sense of loss as an inaccessible, alienated object, new materialists attribute to matter a dynamic and productive force in the world: ‘a positive event rather than a negated origin’.<sup>60</sup> In sharing the commitment of critical human/animal studies to

---

<sup>57</sup> Several different terms have been used to denote the ‘return to materiality’ arguments; some are designed to stress continuity or renewal, whilst others place onus on novelty and emergence. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost suggest that ‘renewed materialisms’ would be more appropriate: ‘Introducing the New Materialisms’ in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency and Politics*, ed. by Coole and Frost (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 1–46. Elizabeth Wilson has signalled her dissatisfaction with the connotations of ‘new materialism’, arguing that ‘there has, to my mind, never been a fully human feminism, a feminism that only now comes into contact with the inorganic, the animalistic, or the artificial’: Vicki Kirby and Wilson, ‘Feminist Conversations with Vicki Kirby and Elizabeth A. Wilson’, *Feminist Theory*, 12:2 (2011), 227–34 (p. 227). While Wilson cogently warns against overemphasising the novelty of the field, due to the prevailing tendency to refer to ‘new materialism’, I use this term throughout the thesis.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Return story’ is inspired by Hemmings, whilst ‘merely cultural’ is taken from Judith Butler, ‘Merely Cultural’, *Social Text*, 52/53 (1997), 265–77.

<sup>59</sup> Coole and Frost, p. 19.

<sup>60</sup> Myra Hird, ‘Feminist Matters: New Materialist Considerations of Sexual Difference’, *Feminist Theory*, 5:2 (2004), 223–32 (p. 229).

decentralising the human subject as the site of academic enquiry, new materialism extends and multiplies the parameters of the body; human flesh is neither viewed as the prime substance through which to engage with questions of materiality, nor are bodies defined by sameness and identity, but are rather ‘constantly forming and reforming in unexpected ways’.<sup>61</sup> New materialism therefore challenges the supposition that we know what bodies can do in advance, and that it is even plausible to assert the veracity of such an abstract entity as ‘the body’.

Multiple, diffusive, a temporary coagulation of flows and dynamic forces: by understanding human corporeality as an ‘open system’, scholars suggest that we can break the apparent obsession with subjectivity that is seen to have characterised recent feminist theory.<sup>62</sup> This helps to open up a space through which to consider the animal as part of a broader orientation towards the non-human. Wolfe argues that “‘the human’ is achieved by escaping or repressing not just its animal origins in nature, the biological and the evolutionary, but more generally by transcending the bonds of materiality and embodiment altogether’.<sup>63</sup> The new materialist call to reconsider corporeality, matter and categories such as ‘the biological’ consequently converges with, and at times also challenges, the preoccupations of critical human/animal studies. By approaching the body as a dynamic positive event, new materialism has contested prevailing understandings of meat, such as Adams’s assertion that it is ‘violently deprived of all feeling’.<sup>64</sup> This definition is notably subverted by Rosi Braidotti in her re-evaluation of the concept of ‘*zoē*’ or bare life. She calls for a shift from understanding the term as ‘the body as disposable matter in the hands of a despotic force of power’ to the ‘being-aliveness of the subject’: ‘a

---

<sup>61</sup> Coole and Frost, p. 10.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>63</sup> Wolfe, *What is Post-Humanism?*, p. xii.

<sup>64</sup> Adams, *Sexual Politics*, p. 67.



nonhuman yet affirmative life-force.’<sup>65</sup> In so doing, she asks: ‘Are we not in awe of this piece of flesh called our “body”, of this aching meat called our “self”, expressing the abject and simultaneously divine potency of life?’<sup>66</sup> If typically one might refer to ‘a piece of meat’ to distinguish it from sensuous living flesh, here it is the flesh that is in fragments and the meat that is ‘aching’. Through her use of language, Braidotti challenges the division of human living flesh from dead, animal, disposable meat. Instead, meat and flesh are both caught up in the dynamic intensities of *zoē* that carry generative force in the world.

In a different vein, Jane Bennett’s *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010) challenges the privileging of meat as an exceptional material in discussions of food politics. As part of her influential account of the ‘vibrant materiality’ of the physical world, Bennett argues that ‘edible matter’ should be viewed as an ‘actant’ that carries ‘the force of materiality’.<sup>67</sup> Suggesting that the Humanities focus exclusively on the cultural meanings of different food practices, she posits that edible matter should instead be understood as operating through dynamic ‘assemblages’: networks of different materials that have effect in the world beyond the volition of the human will.<sup>68</sup> She questions the tendency to attribute particular qualities to meat over and above other food such as vegetables, arguing that the latter are ‘no less transient or vulnerable to decay, and no less material than

---

<sup>65</sup> Rosi Braidotti, ‘The Politics of “Life” Itself and New Ways of Dying’, in *New Materialisms*, ed. by Coole and Frost, pp. 201–20 (pp. 211 and 203). This chapter builds on work previously published in Braidotti, *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2006).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>67</sup> Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 39. Bennett’s use of the term ‘actant’ is explicitly inspired by Bruno Latour, *Pandora’s Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004) and Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring Sciences into Democracy*, trans. by Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. Bennett’s use of ‘assemblage’ is inspired by the work of Deleuze and Guattari. The concept is discussed throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*.

animal fat'.<sup>69</sup> Implying, furthermore, that the tendency to render meat exceptional in discussions of food politics stems from a certain 'Platonic revulsion at that which is subject to change' (a reference to meat's capacity to potently rot), Bennett implicitly moves discussions of meat away from questions of abjection and taboo to instead position it as only one example of edible matter amongst many others worthy of study and attention.<sup>70</sup>

By dissociating meat from abjection, taboo and even death, a new materialist approach poses pertinent questions as to how to consider meat in the contemporary moment. Braidotti's erosion of any self-evident distinction between living flesh and dead meat speaks to the recent development of new biotechnologies promising to deliver 'in vitro meat' grown from stem cells. As 'tissue-cultured meat' occupies the ambiguous realm of the 'semi-living', any obvious division between living flesh and dead meat may no longer be tenable in the foreseeable future.<sup>71</sup> Bennett's focus on the assemblages through which edible matter circulates also draws attention to the seemingly disparate materials and technologies that are vital components in the shifting workings of the meat industrial complex, for example, the prevalence of livestock illnesses such as BSE and foot-and-mouth disease.<sup>72</sup> Bennett furthermore provides a space to consider meat within a broader environmental framework that acknowledges wider ecologies of food production and consumption.

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>71</sup> Oron Catts and Ionat Zurr, 'Disembodied Livestock: The Promise of a Semi-Living Utopia', *Parallax*, 19:11 (2013), 101–13.

<sup>72</sup> The phrase 'meat industrial complex' is inspired by Barbara Noske's term, 'the animal industrial complex', which was coined in 1989 to encompass the networks of agricultural, economic and social interests that ensure the institutionalisation of animal exploitation: see Noske, *Humans and Other Animals* (London: Pluto Press, 1989). Richard Twine has recently returned to the concept, positing it as the 'partly opaque and multiple set of networks and relationships between the corporate (agricultural) sector, governments, and public and private science. With economic, cultural, social and affective dimensions, it encompasses an extensive range of practices, technologies, images, identities and markets': Twine, 'Rereading the "Animal Industrial Complex" — A Concept and Method for Critical Animal Studies?', *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 10:1 (2012), 12–39 (p. 25). I use the term 'meat industrial complex' to focus particularly on the 'networks and relationships' that construct and institutionalise meat production and consumption.

Despite the potential fruitfulness of new materialism for challenging some of the more entrenched assumptions regarding what is at stake in considering meat, this thesis is not entirely swayed by its instantiating gestures, in particular its tendency to conflate the theoretical positivity it assigns to matter as a generative force with an affective positivity whereby this dynamism is viewed as a *prima facie* good.<sup>73</sup> While it can be productive to question psychoanalytic theories that present static, ahistorical accounts that centralise the drama of human subjectivity and its attendant neuroses, new materialist approaches to meat often elide what might be thought of as the ‘negativity’ of becoming and the ethical issues therein. In his discussion of embodiment and post-humanism, Wolfe approvingly quotes Bruno Latour’s claim that ‘it is better to speak of *(x-)morphism* instead of becoming indignant when humans are treated as non-humans or vice versa’.<sup>74</sup> While Latour’s comment contests the assumption that there is an inherent schema for the human body that can be opposed to non-human flesh, it also reveals the difficulty posed to ethics when the mutability of bodily boundaries becomes inherently valorised.

Bennett’s dismissal of disgust at meat eating as ‘Platonic revulsion’, for example, elides how animals killed by the meat industry are not showing a ‘propensity to change’, but are deliberately transformed into meat through animal slaughter. Meat is not a state that is evidence of the vitality of matter or its *x-morphism*, but is rather a potent example of the destructive relations between humans and animals that Bennett otherwise seeks to challenge. Braidotti’s work also shows ambivalence when it comes to navigating the connotations of meatiness. While she collapses flesh and meat into the impersonal generative force of *zoē*, she also rallies

---

<sup>73</sup> For associated critiques of new materialism, see Sara Ahmed, ‘Imaginary Prohibitions: Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the “New Materialism”’, *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, 15 (2008), 23–39 and Hemmings.

<sup>74</sup> Latour in Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*, p. xxi.

against despotic state powers that are able to turn a subject into ‘a brutally oversimplified chunk of meat’.<sup>75</sup> Here the meat is no longer sensuous and ‘aching’, but is ‘oversimplified’ and ‘reduced’, broken down into ‘chunks’ by institutional power. This castigation is difficult to resolve with Braidotti’s voiced commitment to the notion that ‘death is not entropy or the return to inert, lifeless matter, but rather the opening of new intensities and possibilities of the inhuman or the non-humankind’.<sup>76</sup> These ambiguities suggest that the distinction between living flesh and dead meat is more intractable and fraught than new materialism might allow.

Since meat has been naturalised as other-than-human flesh, new materialism’s attempts to push discussions of embodiment beyond human corporeality certainly resonate with some of the aims of this thesis. Yet Stacy Alaimo’s question — ‘what ethical or political positions emerge from the movement across human and more-than-human flesh?’ — is not always sufficiently explored in some new materialist work due to its emphasis upon transformation and change as inherently generative.<sup>77</sup> Rather than calling for us to embrace meatiness as a ‘positive event’, this thesis probes into ambivalence towards meat, working with cultural productions that speak to the anxieties it can provoke and explore lingering attachments to it as a foundation for human kinship and dominance. In seeking to understand how this supposedly other-than-human flesh is encountered in the contemporary moment, this thesis therefore situates itself within the tension between cultural and psychoanalytic theories and the challenge posed to such accounts by new materialist interventions.

---

<sup>75</sup> Braidotti, *Transpositions*, p. 167.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>77</sup> Stacy Alaimo, ‘Trans-Corporeal Feminism and the Ethical Space of Nature’, in *Material Feminisms*, ed. by Alaimo and Susan Hekman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), pp. 237–64 (p. 253).

## **Staging the Carnal Encounter**

Positioning itself between cultural and psychoanalytic theories that provide accounts of the aversions and anxieties implicated in encounters with meat and new materialist work that seeks to push forth new understandings of agency, embodiment and materiality, this thesis does not claim to resolve the theoretical gulf between these two largely irreconcilable bodies of thought. Instead, the thesis begins with an initial focus on psychoanalytic texts that implicate meat in mechanisms of abjection, dirt and taboo. The thesis then proceeds to place greater emphasis upon new materialist discourses as it attends to the future horizons of meat production, including the development of tissue-cultured meat and the threat of increased ‘meat hunger’ in the face of environmental devastation. This structure gives some credence to the instantiating gestures of the ‘return to materiality’ narratives in implicitly suggesting that it is new materialism that provides the context through which to address questions raised by contemporary issues surrounding ecological, scientific and technological change. However, this structure enables the thesis to participate in the shift towards decentralising the human and unravelling discourses of speciesism, whilst concurrently reflecting on the attachments and anxieties that make meat eating such a deeply entrenched mechanism through which to maintain the primacy of the human.

Since a main focus of this thesis is to consider cultural productions and texts that challenge the line between human and animal flesh, its structure reflects two key means through which this distinction can be disturbed. In developing upon my preceding engagement with the *Body Worlds* cadaver as an example of a human body becoming meat, this entry point orientates the opening three chapters of the thesis towards cultural productions that figure meatiness as an aspect of human

embodiment. Chapter One examines the photographic series *Perishables* (Yolaçan, 2002–04), which presents ageing white women clad in delicate Victorian-style clothing made of offal. As alluded to in its title, *Perishables* utilises meat as a material for a contemporary memento mori that explores vulnerability as a condition of embodied life. Chapter Two attends to the site-specific performance *My New York* (Zhang, 2002), which presents meat in the form of a costume of fortified *and* mortified masculinity as a means of speaking to discourses of national trauma in the wake of the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks. Chapter Three conversely analyses the pornographic novella *The Butcher* (Reyes, 1988), which utilises butchery as a provocative motif through which to write of the dissolving pleasures and pains of sexual arousal for its young female narrator. Across these three opening chapters, the thesis reflects upon the implication of meatiness in articulations of embodied vulnerability, national trauma and sexual desire.

These three analyses show how figurations of the meatiness of the human can offer some challenge to the workings of the species border. However, equating meat with the abstract quality of animality or using it as a material through which to explore the human condition can retain the animal body as the ‘absent referent’: the process through which meat becomes ‘unanchored’ from the animal from which it derives.<sup>78</sup> As a consequence, the latter four chapters of the thesis attend to the naturalisation of meat as animal flesh by considering carnal encounters that engage directly with processes of meat consumption and production. Chapter Four examines the experimental text *Diary of a Steak* (Levy, 1997), which presents the doubled voice of a piece of BSE-infected meat and a female hysteric in order to speak to recent food scandals that grapple with the paradoxical desire for meat production to

---

<sup>78</sup> See Adams, *Sexual Politics*, p. 13.

be both concealed and transparent. Chapter Five explores the concept album *One Pig* (Herbert, 2011) as an aural document of the transformation of its titular figure from living flesh into dead meat, in which the intermittent unavailability of the pig voice provokes resistance to the naturalised linearity of animal slaughter. Chapter Six turns towards the future-orientated questions surrounding meat consumption, examining the bio-art performance *inthewrongplaceness* (O'Reilly, 2004–09) as a critical comment on the utopian promise attached to tissue-cultured meat as an escape from industrial modes of meat production. Chapter Seven concludes the thesis by considering the feature film *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (Zeitlin, 2012). This final chapter suggests that the shifting significance of meat in a bayou environment blighted by the consequences of environmental devastation wrestles with the difficulties of moving beyond the ritual of animal sacrifice in times of desperate material scarcity and growing meat hunger. The latter four chapters of the thesis therefore engage directly with the violence inherent in the assumption that the animal is the naturalised flesh that becomes meat and, in so doing, attend to contemporary issues surrounding meat production and consumption.

Exploring these divergent stagings of meatiness through this structure offers a means of thinking the carnal encounter as an internal challenge within the category of the human as meatiness is implicated in human embodiment, whilst also acknowledging that the transformation of living animal flesh into dead meat remains a global ritual through which a species hierarchy is maintained and a seemingly self-evident distinction between the human and the animal is asserted. Providing close readings of a range of artistic media allows a comprehensive consideration of the diverse bodies and contexts that engender the transformation of living flesh into dead meat, encompassing discussions of ageing, muscularity, sexual desire, national

trauma, hysteria and madness, food scandals, organic farming, biotechnologies and climate change. Despite this expansiveness, the thesis remains attentive to the distinctions in form that shape the articulations of these different carnal encounters. However, as Susan McHugh argues, while ‘form matters to perceptions of encounters between meat-producing and consuming creatures’, ‘any single media form remains all too perfectly manipulable and ultimately is inadequate to the task of moving beyond dis/identifying with the spectacle of lives suspended on meat hooks’.<sup>79</sup> While the carnal encounters examined within this thesis show that figurations of meat operate beyond ‘the spectacle of lives suspended on meat hooks’, the close readings of a diverse choice of texts and productions do not posit any singular mode of representation as the ideal framework through which to ‘meet one’s meat’, yet remain attentive to the specificities and limitations of form.

So whose flesh becomes meat, and in what contexts are such transformations engendered and challenged? How is ambivalence staged by contemporary carnal encounters, and how does this serve to trouble the proprietary relationship that otherwise naturalises the repeated ritual of animal sacrifice as the material basis of our culture? To begin examining these central questions, the thesis commences with a close reading of the photographic series *Perishables*. Exploring these images of white women over the age of seventy dressed in elegant clothing formed of chicken skins and cow intestines, Chapter One considers how the intimate conflation of raw meat and ageing feminine flesh visualises the conjoined abjection of the maternal and animal body, prompting reflection on vulnerability as a property that can be embodied *and* owned.

---

<sup>79</sup> McHugh, *Animal Stories*, pp. 176 and 204.



## Chapter One

### Wearing Your Meat on Your Sleeve:

#### Textures of Disavowal in Pinar Yolaçan's *Perishables*

Do age and rot smell the same? <sup>80</sup>

Carole Korsmeyer

Wrinkles, sagging skin, crumbling bones, thinning hair: these are typically seen as signs of an excessive, undesirable, 'failing' corporeality. The conflation of ageing with troublesome bodies is particularly potent for the figure of the older woman. In transgressing ideals of feminine beauty and life-giving fertility, older women are positioned in heightened symbolic proximity to illness, death and decay. As ageing femininity tends to be left oscillating between abjection and outright invisibility in visual culture, the need to confront the enduring stigma around old age seems paramount.<sup>81</sup> Yet what if such a challenge was staged through a collision of ageing femininity and raw meat? This question is posed by the quietly provocative photographic series, *Perishables*, by the artist Pinar Yolaçan. Although the series exclusively uses older white women as models, Yolaçan complicates the pursuit of visibility by cladding her subjects in elegant clothing formed from offal. This chapter considers how *Perishables* utilises the visceral appearance and anticipated entropy of meat to address enduring taboos surrounding the figuration of ageing femininity.

Since the series draws upon motifs of Victorian portraiture implicated in histories of

---

<sup>80</sup> Carole Korsmeyer, *Gender and Aesthetics: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 122.

<sup>81</sup> The use of 'ageing femininity' to describe the subjects of *Perishables* does raise one question: which bodies are not 'ageing'? However, not only is 'ageing' generally preferred within literature on the subject to alternatives such as 'aged', but it also conveys the sense that ageing is a process rather than a static state. For these reasons, I use this term throughout the chapter.

racialised othering, this chapter also reflects upon the use of meat to redress the troubling modes of representation found in nineteenth-century portrait traditions. Utilising an aesthetic that gestures towards the long-standing inscription of vulnerability upon the bodies of ageing women, colonial subjects and animals, *Perishables*' intimate intertwining of raw meat and feminine flesh prompts us to ask who ultimately bears — and indeed, who *wears* — the burden of mortality?

## Surfacing Whiteness



**Figure 1**

‘Untitled’ from *Perishables* series. 40" x 32 3/8" C-Print (2003)

Photograph and copyright: Pinar Yolaçan

Taken from Yolaçan’s series *Perishables*, Figure 1 depicts a pale-skinned older woman dressed in a delicate white dress formed of interwoven translucent mesh and solid, satiny cloth.<sup>82</sup> The subject’s slightly tilted face meets the gaze of the camera with unwavering solemn poise. Radiating light, the portrait emanates an elegance

---

<sup>82</sup> Thank you to Pinar Yolaçan for providing me with Figure 1 and Figure 2 from the *Perishables* series.

that is bolstered by the woman's upright posture and refined clothing. Reflecting on the measured dignity of her subjects, Yolaçan identifies daylight as crucial to the seamless display of clothing, skin, hair and background throughout *Perishables*.<sup>83</sup> The radiance of the lighting illuminates the white background in such a way that even the face of the subject — typically seen as the orientating marker of human individuality — becomes co-opted as an instrument in the overarching production of a transcendent whiteness. As white hair, white skin, white clothing and white background all 'line up' in Figure 1, references to the 'harmony' of the series implicitly allude to the production of a uniform aesthetic by which these constitutive elements collectively surface whiteness.<sup>84</sup>

This understanding of 'surfacing' is drawn from the anthropological research of Janelle Taylor, who defines it as both the materialisation of surfaces and the process of bringing something previously submerged into view.<sup>85</sup> Yolaçan's portraits evoke this duality as the specific interplay of light, skin, cloth and hair all work to render whiteness visible as a formally 'coherent' photographic surface. The construction of whiteness as visual harmony is accompanied by the parallel exteriorisation of certain values as though drawn from deep within the subject, suggesting the racialised discourse of physiognomy.<sup>86</sup> The use of daylight as a naturalised illuminating tool gives the model an ethereal air, implying purity and spirituality: values that a number of critical whiteness theorists identify as paramount

---

<sup>83</sup> Pinar Yolaçan in Mine Haydaroglu, 'Interview with Pinar Yolaçan', *Art Slant*, (n.d.) <<http://www.artslant.com/ny/artists/rackroom/9439>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>84</sup> Haydaroglu.

<sup>85</sup> Janelle S. Taylor, 'Surfacing the Body Interior', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 34 (2005), 741–56.

<sup>86</sup> Physiognomy claims that one can read the moral qualities of a person from the surface of the body, including the face and clothing. It experienced a popular resurgence in Europe and North America in the Victorian period and was utilised to position working-class and colonial subjects as 'degenerate'. See Susan Lalvai, *Photography, Vision and the Production of Modern Bodies* (Albany, NJ: SUNY Press, 1996) and Twine, 'Physiognomy, Phrenology and the Temporality of the Body', *Body and Society*, 8:1 (2002), 67–88.

within Western cultural traditions.<sup>87</sup> Despite spiritual transcendence appearing an intrinsic surface quality, the particular choice of clothing nonetheless signals the portrait's historical lineage. Evidencing Yolaçan's professed interest in the 'Queen of England-type imperial icon and the Victorian body', the long satiny dress with its high neckline and the model's pinned-up hair display sartorial motifs of the nineteenth-century 'cult of true womanhood'.<sup>88</sup> This 'cult' inspired a trend for portraits featuring middle- and upper-class women 'as white as the paper', intertwining whiteness and femininity in reified images of bourgeois sanctity and gentility.<sup>89</sup> Victorian dress and the luminescent qualities of daylight confer virtue on *Perishables*' ageing subjects through visual tropes of the physiognomic principles that informed much nineteenth-century portraiture.

Lighting and dress are crucial to the production of a seamless surface of whiteness in *Perishables*, evoking a sense of inner virtue exteriorised. However, in keeping with Taylor's observation that surfaces rarely achieve permanence, the interplay of these two constitutive elements opens up the possibility of disturbance.<sup>90</sup> Discussing the relationship between whiteness, skin and light, Steven Connor argues that whiteness has been depicted as 'pure luminosity [...] a skin so refined that it is itself vanishing from view, and letting through a light coming from within'.<sup>91</sup> The

---

<sup>87</sup> Despite fears that it centres that which it aims to critique, critical whiteness studies is a body of theory that challenges the way whiteness gains ascendancy through being 'unmarked' by examining the mechanisms of its construction. See Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997); Ruth Frankenberg, *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); and George Yancy, ed., *What White Looks Like: African-American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>88</sup> Kevin McGarry, 'Greater New Yorkers: Pinar Yolaçan', *New York Times*, (May 20 2010) <<http://tmagazine.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/05/20/greater-new-yorkers-pinar-yolacan/>> [accessed 26 June 2015]. The 'cult of true womanhood' was culturally dominant in the UK and the USA between 1820 and 1860. Although it promoted virtues, including piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity, were presented as universal feminine aspirations, it was white middle-class women who were presumed able to successfully embody these values: see Venetria K. Patton, *Women in Chains: The Legacy of Slavery in Black Women's Fiction* (New York: SUNY Press, 2000).

<sup>89</sup> Dyer, *White*, p. 113.

<sup>90</sup> See Taylor.

<sup>91</sup> Steven Connor, *The Book of Skin* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), p. 161.

radiance of white skin is certainly apparent in Figure 1; however, the delicacy implied by the subject's translucency concurrently inflects whiteness with an implicit perviousness. Investing in an aesthetic ideal of 'thin or minimal skin' to secure white luminescence consequently gives a fragility to Figure 1. In her analysis of the changing representation of ageing in the visual arts since the late 1980s, Anca Cristofovici observes that artistic renderings of ageing bodies have often used a marble or alabaster tone that 'brings the surface of the skin closer to the eye. In their transparency, we also read [...] frailty'.<sup>92</sup> As the aestheticised fragility of ageing skin compounds the delicacy of white radiance, there is a sense of brittle vulnerability to the otherwise harmonious surface of *Perishables*.

Somewhat ironically, it is the bourgeois clothing of the series that disrupts its ornamental beauty through the revelation that the fabrics are formed from so-called 'low' meat, such as cow intestines and chicken skins. The use of meat commonly referred to as 'offal' fuelled a number of sensationalist headlines that accompanied the exhibition's debut in New York in 2004, with Yolaçan being branded as 'The Tripe Artist'.<sup>93</sup> Despite this online conjecture, the presence of these carnal materials is far from transparent, being tonally obscured in the portraits as the paleness of the meat merges with the monochromatic schema. Typically, figurations of meatiness have been assumed to operate through the mechanism of visual exposure, whereby the interior of the body is opened up to the gaze. In *Perishables*, by contrast, the presence of meat is mainly perceptible through the peculiarly textured qualities of the clothing.

---

<sup>92</sup> Anca Cristofovici, 'Touching Surfaces: Photography, Aging and Aesthetics of Change', in *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations*, ed. by Katherine M. Woodward (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 268–96 (p. 276).

<sup>93</sup> Following the premiere of *Perishables*, this name appeared online, originating in the post, 'Pinar Yolaçan is "The Tripe Artist"' on the blog *Book of Joe*, (22 November 2014) <[http://www.bookofjoe.com/2004/11/pinar\\_yolacan\\_i.html](http://www.bookofjoe.com/2004/11/pinar_yolacan_i.html)> [accessed 26 June 2015].



**Figure 2**

‘Untitled’ from *Perishables* series. 32 x 40" C-Print (2002)

Photograph and copyright: Pinar Yolaçan

Folds, ripples and tumbling cloth are all associated with the decadence of drapery, yet in Figure 2, they disturb the seamlessness of the portrait. Cathy Horyn offers a rather neutral description of the model’s neckpiece as a ‘prim blouse splashed with ruffles’.<sup>94</sup> However, the sudden movement implied by the notion of being ‘splashed’ with this texture contrasts with the way that the neckpiece overflows outwards as

---

<sup>94</sup> Cathy Horyn, ‘A Shelf Life So Short It Takes Your Breath Away’, *New York Times*, (16 November 2004)  
<<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=940CE6DD153FF935A25752C1A9629C8B63&pagewanted=all>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

though spilling onto the bleached surface of the photograph. Functioning as an excessive excrescence, the meat clothing breaches the thin membrane of whiteness using the expansive force of texture, disrupting the flattened harmony of the series.

### **Exposing the Seams**

The use of meat as fabric for the elegant clothing of *Perishables* nods to the continued use of animal bodies as the material for luxurious fashion garments that connote wealth and status; to this degree, the dresses of the series become somewhat grotesque extensions of the mink fur coat or the fox-head scarf. However, the sense of depth produced by the textured folds of cloth and crevices of fabric evokes something equally disturbing: the impression that the inside of the subject's body has spilled out onto the image. This suggested intrusion of interior upon exterior speaks to a broader 'deconstruction fashion' trend that has emerged at the crossroads of art and fashion since the late 1980s. Emphasising change and 'risky transformation', deconstruction fashion focuses on bringing the inside to the outside, exposing the 'secret' structures that hold garments together with 'x-ray like capability'.<sup>95</sup>

*Perishables* takes deconstruction fashion to its extreme as the meat of the clothing evokes the very 'meat' that holds the body together, its own fleshy seams. In so doing, the series indicates how 'clothing art' does not veil over or evade questions of embodiment, but instead attends to the intimate relation between body and dress.<sup>96</sup>

As Alexandra Warwick and Dani Cavallaro draw attention to the question of where

---

<sup>95</sup> Alison Gill, 'Deconstruction Fashion: The Making of Unfinished, Decomposing and Reassembled Clothes', *Fashion Theory*, 2:1 (1998), 25–49 (pp. 26 and 28).

<sup>96</sup> While dress-making has historically been considered more of a craft than an art, a number of exhibitions emerged in the 1980s and 1990s that featured women artists working with dress and clothing, including *Conceptual Clothing* (1986–1988), *Fall from Fashion* (1993), *American Art Today: Clothing as Metaphor* (1993), *Discursive Dress* (1994), *Empty Dress: Clothing as Surrogate in Recent Art* (1993–1995) and *Art/Fashion* (1997). While clothing art was certainly evident before this period, the 1980s witnessed an intensified merger of the spheres of art and fashion.



‘the body ends and the dress begins’, the use of meat as fabric is a particularly visceral way of exploring the instability of this division.<sup>97</sup>

*Perishables* is not the first or sole artwork to have presented meat clothing in some form. The most infamous example is Lady Gaga’s meat dress, worn to the MTV Video Music Awards in 2010: a sartorial decision that was lauded as the ‘Fashion Moment of the Year’.<sup>98</sup> However, Mancunian artist and performer Linder Sterling also wore a meat dress on stage at The Hacienda in 1982, simultaneously handing out raw meat wrapped in pornographic imagery to audiences as a comment on the objectification of women.<sup>99</sup> In 1987 the Czech-Canadian artist Jana Sterbak subsequently presented her meat sculpture, *Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic* (hereafter *Flesh Dress*). As part of her broader exploration of the disciplinary mechanisms of fashion, *Flesh Dress*, shown in Figure 3, courted controversy upon its display in the Canadian National Gallery in 1991.<sup>100</sup> The piece was an empty dress made of raw steak, which was left to rot over six weeks, becoming increasingly unwearable as its constitutive meat shrunk into a tight cage through a process of diminishing decay. As with *Flesh Dress*, meat functions in *Perishables* as both adorning fabric and bodily form, blurring the boundaries between the corporeal and the sartorial.

---

<sup>97</sup> Alexandra Warwick and Dani Cavallaro, *Fashioning the Frame: Boundaries, Dress and Body* (London: Berg, 1998), p. xvii.

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, Belinda Luscombe, ‘Top 10 Fashion Statements’, *Time*, (9 December 2010) <[http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2035319\\_2034464\\_2034435,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2035319_2034464_2034435,00.html)> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>99</sup> Linder Sterling’s Hacienda performance is described in Lionel Bovier, ed., *Linder: Works 1976–2006* (Zurich: JRP-Ringier; New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2006), p. 40. Sterling criticises Lady Gaga for her failure to acknowledge precursors to her meat dress in Sean O’Hagan, ‘Linder Sterling: “Lady Gaga Didn’t Acknowledge I Wore a Meat Dress First”’, *Observer*, (12 January 2014) <<http://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2014/jan/12/linder-sterling-artist-punk-st-ives>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>100</sup> Much of the criticism levelled at *Flesh Dress* centred on the accusation, made by both the Canadian Food Bank and MP Felix Holtmann, that it was wasting Canadian meat; Holtmann subsequently sought to pass a bill through the Canadian parliament banning artists from using food in their work: see Scott Watson, ‘“Pornography Disguised as Art”: Some Recent Episodes Concerning Censorship and the Visual Arts in Canada’, in *Interpreting Censorship in Canada*, ed. by Allan C. Hutchinson and Klaus Petersen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 221–40.



**Figure 3**

*Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic* (1987)

Photograph: Jana Sterbak

Playing with the division between body and dress and drawing on the aesthetics of an era enamoured with the physiognomic principle that the nature of the self can be read off the surface of the image, *Perishables* invites us to see its subjects precisely as meat. This is accompanied by formal nods to an alternative strand of nineteenth-century portraiture tied less to the surfacing of purity and gentility than to histories of racialised and classed othering intimately bound up with imperialist domination. As something intensely corporeal floods the image, in Figure 2 the radiance of the lighting is not a flattering tool of illumination, but a violent mechanism of exposure. While composure and imperiousness are suggested in

Figure 1, corresponding to the regal airs of nineteenth-century bourgeois portraiture, in Figure 2 there is a tightness to the subject's face, a sense of discomfort generated through the 'blunt frontality' historically utilised in face-on portraits of the insane, the criminal, the poor and colonial subjects of ethnographic research.<sup>101</sup>

Nineteenth-century ethnographic photography constructed subjects as degenerate by merging the discourses of morality, biology and anthropology, helping to naturalise working-class and colonial subjects as biologically 'primitive'. The distinctive use of seriality as form in such photography, deployed by *Perishables* in turn, positions subjects as though specimens organised into taxonomic categories. Seriality and blunt frontality therefore suggest a reversal; as William Ewing observes of the models of *Perishables*, 'now it is they who submit to the scrutiny of the lens'.<sup>102</sup> Allusions to ethnographic representation are compounded by the link that Yolaçan makes between the folds of meaty cloth and female genitalia in an interview with Richard Speer.<sup>103</sup> Her observation recalls the museal display of black and working-class women's genitals, most notoriously demonstrated by the case of Saartjie Baartman, as part of the nineteenth-century construction of a 'Western racial-sexual science'.<sup>104</sup> The insinuation that the clothing is vaginal in appearance is a further allusion to the exploitative histories of ethnographic display layered within *Perishables*.

---

<sup>101</sup> Lalvai, p. 66.

<sup>102</sup> William A. Ewing, 'Pinar Yolaçan: Selected Work by Pinar Yolaçan', *Saatchi Gallery*, (2012) <[http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/pinar\\_yolacan.htm?section\\_name=photography](http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/pinar_yolacan.htm?section_name=photography)> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>103</sup> Richard Speer, 'Couture von Carne', *Willamette Week*, (2 March 2005) <<http://www.wweek.com/portland/print-article-4148-print.html>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>104</sup> Saartjie Baartman was a former slave who was displayed in exhibitions and freak shows in London and Paris in the early 1800s. Her skeleton, brain and preserved genitals remained on view at the Musée de L'Homme in Paris until the mid-1970s. Also known as the 'Hottentot Venus', Baartman's body was used to frame the study of black women's sexuality by European scientists: see Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Black Venus: Sexualised Savages, Primal Fears and Primitive Narratives in French* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 17.

Nods to imperialist modes of racialised representation also inflect a subsequent photographic series by Yolaçan. *Maria* was first shown at the Rivington Arms Art Gallery in 2008. By contrast with *Perishables*, which focuses solely on white female subjects over the age of seventy, *Maria* depicts black women between the ages of 27 and 90 from the Brazilian island of Ithaparica, situated off the former slave port, Salvador da Bahia, now considered ‘the capital of Afro-Brazilian culture’.<sup>105</sup> The series replicates Baroque and Portuguese colonial fashions, overlain with accessories made of offal. Also utilising a monochromatic formal schema, *Maria* clads its models in clothing of various shades of mid-browns, black, deep reds and light greys in front of a black matte background. Diverging from the use of daylight as lighting in *Perishables*, in *Maria* the flash of the camera was used to create the light within the photograph, allowing, in Yolaçan’s words, ‘everything to come out of darkness’.<sup>106</sup> Her description evokes the colonial imagination that situated Africa as the ‘heart of darkness’; furthermore, the use of formal seriality and frontal exposure perpetuates the same visual techniques historically used to document colonial subjects. This is a repetition that cannot be shared by *Perishables* and its models, for whom these modes of representation mark a challenge to conventional figurations of white middle- and upper-class women in the Victorian era. The potency of these two series therefore differs: as *Maria* displays the sumptuous wealth of colonial styles of dress historically denied to Afro-Brazilian women, but replicates the blunt frontality of ethnographic representation, *Perishables* dresses its subjects in the iconic Victorian clothing often flaunted by

---

<sup>105</sup> As a legacy of its position as the former colonial capital of Brazil, Salvador da Bahia became viewed as the ‘cradle of African traditions’ following the eventual outlawing of slavery in the nineteenth century: Roger Sansi, *Fetishes and Monuments: Afro-Brazilian Art and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Berghahn, 2007), p. 2. Sansi traces the complex and contested history and politics of ‘Afro-Brazilianism’ from the nineteenth century to the present.

<sup>106</sup> Yolaçan in Raina Lampkins-Fielder, ‘Pinar Yolaçan: Maria’, *Some/Things*, (n.d.) <<http://www.someslashthings.com/pinar-yolacan/>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

white bourgeois women, but places the models under a gaze historically reserved for colonial and working-class subjects.<sup>107</sup>



**Figure 4**

‘Untitled’ from *Maria* series. 40 x 30" C-print (2007)

Photograph: Pinar Yolaçan and Rivington Arms, New York

*Maria* and *Perishables* also differ in the aestheticisation of their constitutive materials. While the ripples and folds of cloth in *Perishables* are disturbingly visceral, in *Maria* the offal accessories register less insistently. The use of meat is

---

<sup>107</sup> This is not to suggest that all colonial and working-class subjects were depicted in this manner during the Victorian era. The exhibition ‘Black Chronicles II’, which premiered at Rivington Place in London in September 2014, displays a hitherto unseen archive of photographs of black subjects in Britain between 1830 and 1938 as part of ‘The Missing Chapter’ project. It not only seeks to address the absence of black subjects in histories of Victorian photography, but also to challenge assumptions about the prevailing aesthetics and formal modes of figuration during the colonial era. See ‘Black Chronicles II’, *Autograph ABP*, (2014) <<http://autograph-abp.co.uk/exhibitions/black-chronicles-ii>> and ‘The Missing Chapter’, *Autograph ABP*, (2014) <<http://autograph-abp.co.uk/autographabp/the-missing-chapter>> [both accessed 26 June 2015].

often relegated to accoutrements and the carnal materials have a shiny, tonally rich quality with a smoother textural appearance. Taken together, both series speak to Yolaçan's overarching preoccupation with probing 'the vocabulary that established the Western Caucasian female as the ideal representation of beauty in a colonial context'.<sup>108</sup> Since 2000, Yolaçan has utilised historical modes of representing femininity to figure female bodies that continue to be neglected or abjected within contemporary visual culture. More recently, for example, she has referenced statues and sculptures of fertility goddesses in depicting 'plus-size' women in her photographic series *Mother Goddess* (2009) and *Like a Stone* (2011). *Perishables* can be read as a particularly interrogative work within Yolaçan's oeuvre. While *Maria*, *Mother Goddess* and *Like a Stone* use their unusual materials to assert their models as subjects of beauty (the title of *Maria* referencing the iconic figure of the Virgin Mary), in *Perishables* the ontological pretensions of whiteness are challenged. *Maria* and *Perishables* both layer the discordant histories of racialised representation fostered under colonial expansion within their frames. In *Perishables* this generates a fractious tension between the reification and exposure of white subjectivity.

That *Perishables* constructs a specific convergence of ageing women and visceral innards shrouds the series in a sense of deathliness far less apparent in the *Maria* portraits with its diverse age range of models. The theme of mortality is partly suggested by the implicit ephemerality of its materials as the latent entropy enfolded within the seams of meat alludes to the impermanence of existence. Admittedly, the physical decay of the cloth is not apparent in the portraits in the palpable manner of Sterbak's *Flesh Dress*. Instead it is the name of Yolaçan's series, *Perishables*, that most emphatically signals the 'passage of time, the inevitability of physical

---

<sup>108</sup> Yolaçan in McGarry.

transformation [...] a powerful reminder that the self is subject to change.’<sup>109</sup> As a contemporary memento mori, *Perishables* contradicts the pursuit of absence that has been an enduring part of the paradox of white representation. Richard Dyer describes whiteness as an aesthetic predicated on the lack of ‘any *thing*, in other words, material reality’.<sup>110</sup> Paradoxically, this desire for spiritual transcendence situates whiteness close to blankness, balanced on the very abyss of non-being. Sean Redmond elaborates that ‘when one reaches the highest ideals of whiteness, one literally disappears into the ether’.<sup>111</sup> Bypassing this fraught balancing act between etherealised absence and absolute negation, *Perishables* confronts whiteness with its own ‘meatiness’. While Dyer suggests that in the logics of whiteness, death is ‘a blank that may be immateriality (pure spirit) or else just nothing at all’, *Perishables* challenges this erasure of mortality through its use of visceral materials.<sup>112</sup>

### **Abject Folds and Taboo Flesh**

In ‘confronting’ whiteness through its use of offal, *Perishables* plays upon the taboos that structure certain intimacies with raw meat and the pollutive or ‘dirty’ status at times attributed to animal flesh when it is seen to be out of place. Taboo describes the frisson that surrounds physical contact with that which has been categorised as sacred and forbidden. Discussed most notably in Freud’s *Totem and Taboo*, taboo is a crucial part of Freud’s account of the development of human kinship models, which posits a progression from ‘primitive’ communities into the ‘civilised’ patriarchal family. Taboo must be understood in relation to its counterpart, totem, the

---

<sup>109</sup> Elizabeth Hallam et al., *Beyond the Body: Death and Social Identity* (Padstow: Routledge, 1999), p. 5.

<sup>110</sup> Dyer in Sean Redmond, ‘The Whiteness of *The Rings*’, in *The Persistence of Whiteness: Race and Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*, ed. by Daniel Benardi (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 91–101 (p. 97).

<sup>111</sup> Redmond, p. 92.

<sup>112</sup> Dyer, *White*, p. 207.

structure through which entities, typically animals, are positioned as protecting spirits that unify clans and tribes: a relation of cross-species kinship perceived to strengthen a community and its constitutive individuals. This depends on the simultaneous establishment of the taboo, which governs engagement with the totem object: for example, in the case of animals, prohibiting their consumption and controlling contact with refuse and corpses.

As Freud outlines, there is an ambivalence to taboo as it gives its objects an imagined energy. This animating charge, the threat of transmission by contact, produces anxiety towards, and attraction to, the object of taboo; the subject ‘constantly wants to carry out this action (the act of touching), he sees in it the highest pleasure, but he may not carry it out, and he even abominates it’.<sup>113</sup> *Totem and Taboo* is dependent upon a racist imaginary that instantiates a division between contemporaneous European society and the racialised figure of ‘the savage’.<sup>114</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss furthermore attacked totemism on methodological grounds, seeing its proponents as postulating reductive structures that simplified empirical evidence.<sup>115</sup> Since *Totem and Taboo* perpetuates the division between ‘the civilised’ and ‘the savage’ that characterises the colonial imagination, it runs contrary to the spirit of *Perishables*, which partially works to critique the pretensions of white bourgeois iconography of the Victorian era. However, Freud’s emphasis upon the tactile as the register through which aversion and allure are experienced persuasively accounts for the frisson that is attached to sensual proximities with particular objects.

---

<sup>113</sup> Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. 50.

<sup>114</sup> While *Totem and Taboo* argues for continuity between the figures of ‘the savage’ and ‘the neurotic’ through the enduring structure of taboo, Freud’s text evidences Hal Foster’s claim that psychoanalysis projects the primitive not only as a primal stage in cultural history, but also in individual processes of subject formation. As Foster states, ‘this association of the primitive with the prehistoric and/or the pre-Oedipal, the other and the unconscious, is the primitivist fantasy’: see Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1996), p. 178.

<sup>115</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).



This includes *Perishables*' provocative figuration of intimacy with offal, as its subjects do not wear their hearts, but rather meat on their sleeves.

With the theory of taboo attempting to account for the push-pull, attraction-aversion that structures contact with particular objects, Freud's work is a crucial influence on Douglas's later anthropological study of pollution and dirt, *Purity and Danger*. Douglas's account, as with Freud's discussion of taboo, focuses on dirt as a category rather than a specific content. Douglas argues that there is no object that is inherently dirty or polluted; instead dirt is 'matter out of place', defying categorisation and order.<sup>116</sup> Like taboo, dirt is therefore linked above all to ambiguity. Douglas's decision to focus particular attention upon the rituals prescribed by religious texts such as the Book of Leviticus means that meat is frequently discussed throughout *Purity and Danger*. For Douglas, meat is an object whose production and consumption is heavily controlled and ritualised as a means of maintaining clear divisions between the edible and the inedible and the nutritious and the pollutive. *Purity and Danger* helps to explain why offal, the prime constitutive material of the *Perishables* clothing, has a heightened link with dirt and waste. Originally referring solely to the internal organs or entrails of animals, offal has been described as the meat that is most anatomical in its appearance and least able to disguise its bodily origins.<sup>117</sup> Offal no longer refers to any particular body parts; instead, it is the term for the sections of the animal body that are separated and potentially discarded through the slaughter process (etymologically 'all that falls away').<sup>118</sup> In her book *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (1995), Anne McClintock reads Douglas's analysis of pollution through a Marxist-influenced

---

<sup>116</sup> Douglas, p. xvii.

<sup>117</sup> Jeremy Strong, 'The Modern Offal Eater', *Gastronomica*, 6:2 (2006), 30–39.

<sup>118</sup> See the entry for 'offal' in *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 2, p. 1978.

framework, arguing that ‘dirt is what is left over after use value has been extracted’.<sup>119</sup> This description seems highly applicable to tripe; offal has certainly been valorised in regional cuisine and as a fashionable feature of contemporary gastronomy, yet it remains associated with waste. While *Perishables* challenges the definition of offal as a valueless material discarded from the animal body when it is ‘dressed’ for slaughter by rather ironically transforming it into elegant bourgeois gowns, the use of such ‘lowly’ meat accentuates the impression that the carnal fabric is sullyng the otherwise ornamental imagery.

In their respective discussions of taboo and dirt, Freud and Douglas provide distinct albeit related ways of understanding the wearing of offal as an anxiety-inducing, polluting attack on the ornamentality of Yolaçan’s portraits. However, it is Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror* that accounts for *Perishables*’ provocative layering of meat and ageing femininity through her discussion of the conjoined abjection of the maternal and animal body. Building upon psychoanalytic theories of subject formation, Kristeva explores how subjects confront that which operates at the margins of ‘the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable’.<sup>120</sup> Subscribing to the broader psychoanalytic emphasis upon unity and wholeness as (impossible) ideals for the subject, Kristeva outlines abjection as the process through which subjects attempt to secure the boundary between that which is considered ‘I’ and that which is ‘not-I’, so that all that threatens the phantasy of the ‘clean and proper’ body is expelled.<sup>121</sup> As with taboo and dirt, abjection is a repeated process characterised by mechanisms of categorisation, expulsion and prohibition. Yet, as a defence mechanism, abjection cannot secure the watertight boundaries upon which differentiation and demarcation

---

<sup>119</sup> Anne McClintock, *Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 153.

<sup>120</sup> Kristeva, p. 1.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

depend. As Kristeva acknowledges, ‘the more or less beautiful image in which I behold or recognise myself rests upon an abjection that sunders it as soon as repression, the constant watchman, is relaxed.’<sup>122</sup> Kristeva’s reference to the subject’s recognition of itself in the ‘beautiful image’ is indebted to Jacques Lacan’s account of the ‘Mirror Stage’: the point at which the infant begins to (mis-)recognise itself as a coherent self-image in the mirror and in the eyes of others.<sup>123</sup> Kristeva’s theory of abjection therefore resonates with *Perishables* in which the conventionalised signs of beauty within the photographs — the feminine subjects, the decorative dress and the monochromatic white schema — are put into crisis by offal as a threat to the phantasy of the ‘clean and proper’ body.

That meat is a threat to wholeness and purity is explained in *Powers of Horror* as Kristeva argues that abjection is founded on the simultaneous disavowal of the maternal and animal body. To this degree, Kristeva’s work stands as a direct counter to the paternal focus of *Totem and Taboo*. Freud’s account discusses the act of aggression by the ‘primal horde’, whereby the father is eaten by a band of jealous sons. However, the remorse this produces helps to bolster the role of the father, and concurrently creates the totem animal. While the totem animal is ordinarily protected from sacrifice, the ritual of the totem meal repeats the killing of the father through the eating of his animal substitute. This act enshrines a foundational separation between the human and the animal (tied in with the taboo on cannibalism), yet also recognises a potential substitutability between the two (the animal standing in as sacrificed flesh for the human).<sup>124</sup> Responding to the degree to which the mother remains ‘implicit, unsublimated and beyond either representation or the social’ in this account as Freud

---

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>123</sup> See Jacques Lacan, ‘The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function’, in *Ecrits: The Complete First Edition in English*, trans. by Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006 [1966]), pp. 75–82.

<sup>124</sup> See Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, pp. 232–43.

admits to 'being at a loss' to explain maternal deities, Kristeva examines how Freud's model of human kinship is dependent upon the conjoined disavowal of both the animal body and the maternal body through the process of abjection.<sup>125</sup> All that threatens the resurgence of the maternal/animal nexus must be held apart from the self. As a result, bodily fluids, such as menstrual blood, provoke disturbance, as does food 'when it is a border between two distinct entities or territories'.<sup>126</sup> Since abjection concerns that which 'confronts us [...] with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of *animal*', contact with meat represents a 'fragile state' for the human subject, engendering proximity with corpse, food and animal body.<sup>127</sup> As with the maternal body, meat is associated with life-giving properties, yet it is also capable of slipping into the 'other' of the fertile and the nutritious, becoming a site of decay and death that threatens the subject with annihilation. This leads Kristeva to argue that the maternal, alongside the menstrual and 'bloody' animal flesh, is 'a fascinating semantic crossroads, the propitious place for abjection where *death* and *femininity*, *murder* and *procreation*, *cessation of life* and *vitality* all come together'.<sup>128</sup> As Kristeva's work positions meat as a site where the maternal and the animal converge, the carnal materials of *Perishables* gesture towards this concurrent abjection of the feminine and animal body.

What is so powerful about *Perishables*, however, is that the series does not simply suggest that animal and female bodies are abject; instead, it utilises the layering of ageing feminine skin and offal to visualise the *process* of abjection. Brinkema has cogently warned against transforming discussions of abjection into identifying paradigmatic examples of the abject object. As she argues, *Powers of*

---

<sup>125</sup> See Oliver, p. 263 and Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. 247

<sup>126</sup> Kristeva, p. 75.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

*Horror* ‘writes against “instances of” or “images of” instead figuring abjection as a deconstituting gesture that is continually in movement’.<sup>129</sup> It is precisely this sense of movement that is figured by Yolaçan’s series. As the meat clothing spills over the flattened white surface of Figure 2, this textural expulsion evokes, but cannot quite be contained by, the ‘objectifying visuality’ of physiognomy with its investment in the readability of the still life.<sup>130</sup> In mobilising texture as an expansive force, *Perishables* produces a provocative evocation of the ‘deconstituting gesture’ of abjection.

The seams of meat erupting outwards from their wearers suggest the process of expulsion upon which abjection depends. And yet, the visceral appearance of the cloth, still clinging to the exterior of the body, indicates the inability to fully secure the desired ends of abjection. As Kristeva notes in *Powers of Horror*, ‘I abject myself within the same motion through which “I” establish myself’; abjection attempts to expunge from the subject that which is inextricable from embodied life.<sup>131</sup> This visualisation of abjection contrasts notably with the constrictive decaying of *Flesh Dress*, which constructs a diminishing carnal cage. Instead, *Perishables* brings to mind the video art of Jayne Parker. In the short film *K* (1989), one scene shows Parker naked, regurgitating a knotted chain of intestine-like strands of cloth out of her mouth, before knitting them into a dress with her hands.<sup>132</sup> Also generating movement through its expansive textures, *Perishables* suggests the same desire to project that which is characterised as abject from interior to exterior, whilst its blurring of the inner/outer divide implies that this process can never fully establish the clear boundaries that are sought.

---

<sup>129</sup> Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects*, p. 138.

<sup>130</sup> Twine, p. 17.

<sup>131</sup> Kristeva, p. 3.

<sup>132</sup> For more on the video art of Jayne Parker, see Zoe Shearman et al., *Jayne Parker: Filmworks*, 79–00 (Exeter: Spacex Gallery, 2000).

In visualising the process of abjection through taboo materials, *Perishables* can be read as an inheritor of the 1990s 'Bad Girls' movement: the term given to a loose group of women artists who produced confrontational work using meat, urine and animal skins to explore 'fear and fascination' with femininity as 'desiring, corporeal being' rather than a fantasy ideal.<sup>133</sup> However, *Perishables* can be distinguished from this movement for its mobilisation of abjection as an aesthetic that layers contemporary and historical registers. In *Imperial Leather*, McClintock argues that abjection is 'a formative aspect of modern industrial imperialism', seeing it as both indicative of a psychoanalytic discourse that emerged within the colonial era and a mechanism that is central to the workings of the imperialist imaginary.<sup>134</sup> White femininity was idealised as the 'clean and proper' space that would guarantee the continuation of colonial rule, yet was also the flesh onto which imperialist anxieties were projected. The use of offal as fabric in *Perishables* visualises this paradox. The degraded ornamentality of the photographs figure what must be disavowed to constitute the white feminine body as the site of virtue and purity. However, as the meat lingers within their frames, clinging to the surface of the skin, this visualises what cannot be fully expunged from the subject.

### **Touching Vulnerability**

*Perishables* punctures the idealised image of white bourgeois femininity through its meaty folds that not only visualise the process of abjection, but also suggest it as a mechanism key to the imperialist imaginary. In so doing, the series grapples with the

---

<sup>133</sup> Rosemary Betterton, *An Intimate Distance: Women, Artists and the Body* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 6. See also Institute of Contemporary Arts (London, England) and Centre for Contemporary Arts (Glasgow), *Bad Girls* (London: ICA, 1993), which features the six artists displayed in the formative 1993 exhibition of the same name: Helen Chadwick, Dorothy Cross, Nicole Eisenman, Rachel Evans, Nan Goldin and Sue Williams.

<sup>134</sup> McClintock, p. 72.

capacity for abjection to function as a subversive aesthetic. In her assessment of ‘abject art’ and the ‘Bad Girls’, Rosemary Betterton observes that ‘if the physical body is the touchstone of aesthetic truth in modern art, then it is the specifically gendered body which has provided its central metaphors’.<sup>135</sup> Betterton is ambivalent about the transgressive potential of the ‘Bad Girls’, seeing the movement as often repeating the use of the feminine body as ‘a metaphor for the division between surface allure and concealed decay’.<sup>136</sup> This potentially traps figurations of femininity between the ‘death’s head’ of the memento mori and the ‘angel face’ of idealised womanhood.<sup>137</sup>

In a sense, this ‘trap’ is central to *Perishables* as it probes into the mechanisms of disavowal that instantiated the image of the bourgeois white woman as a complicit icon of nineteenth-century imperialist expansion. As in Sterbak’s *Flesh Dress*, femininity bears the burden of visually manifesting the spectacle of anticipated rot.<sup>138</sup> However, *Perishables* is particularly provocative as it is ageing feminine bodies that serve as the ‘vehicles for rotting flesh’.<sup>139</sup> Judith Mastai argues of the rotting *Flesh Dress* that ‘it brings to mind the inexorable aging of the body and society’s eschewal of the elderly, particularly the older woman — the denial of her sexual desirability, even visibility’.<sup>140</sup> In using ageing women as subjects, Yolaçan’s series makes explicit what was only implied by Sterbak’s sculpture. While the parallels between meaty cloth and ageing skin in *Perishables* evoke the wider

---

<sup>135</sup> Betterton, p. 5.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>137</sup> The polarity of ‘death’s head’ and ‘angel face’ is drawn from Caroline Evans, *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity and Deathliness* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 244.

<sup>138</sup> This also speaks to Bronfen’s analysis of the over-coding of death onto the feminine corpse in *Over Her Dead Body*.

<sup>139</sup> Adams in Adams and Annie Potts, ‘The Politics of Carol J. Adams’, *Antennae*, 14 (2010), 12–24 (p. 17).

<sup>140</sup> Judith Mastai, ‘The Anorexic Body: Contemporary Installation Art by Women Artists in Canada’, in *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings*, ed. by Griselda Pollock (Trowbridge: Routledge, 1996), pp. 135–148 (p. 142).

tendency to consign the elderly subject to a form of ‘social death’, this stigma is specifically borne by the older woman.<sup>141</sup> *Perishables* gestures towards this by suggesting ageing femininity as the site of weakness in white representation: the point of its rupture made palpable as a spectacle of anticipated decay. As the intrusion of meat into the otherwise regal imagery of *Perishables* signals a crack in the white imaginary, the series provocatively places the onus of this fracture on the figure of the ageing woman.

While the convergence of ageing feminine skin and raw meat is discomfiting in gesturing towards enduring stigmas surrounding the depiction of ageing bodies, *Perishables*’ mobilisation of the visceral textures and palpable folds of flesh evokes the work of other contemporary women photographers who have figured ageing femininity including Jacqueline Hayden and Jenny Saville. Cristofovici has praised their work for exploring ageing not as a static image, but as a ‘process of growth’.<sup>142</sup> Like Yolaçan, these photographers engage directly with the embodied processes of ageing through invoking ‘haptic visuality’. Marks utilises this term in relation to film spectatorship to denote a mode of viewing that generates an imagined sense of contact between the perceiver and the represented object. Rather than see vision as inherently objectifying or a means of gaining mastery over the image, she explores haptics as ‘tactile epistemologies’ that generate sensuous intimacy between the viewing eye and the object. For Marks, this encourages a move away from a focus on depth and form to instead consider the tactile potency of texture.<sup>143</sup> While Marks

---

<sup>141</sup> Hallam, p. 56.

<sup>142</sup> Anca Cristofovici, *Touching Surfaces: Photographic Aesthetics, Temporality, Aging* (New York: Rodopi, 2009), p. 6. See also Mark Durden, ‘Negotiating Difference: The Transactions of Portraiture’, in *Masquerade: Women’s Contemporary Portrait Photography*, Vol. 2, ed. by Kate Newton and Christine Rolph (Cardiff: Ffotogallery, 2003), pp. 7–9; Rachel Greer, ‘Beyond the Frame: Narratives of Otherness’, in *Masquerade*, ed. by Newton and Rolph, pp. 106–11; and Michelle Meagher, ‘Jenny Saville and a Feminist Aesthetics of Disgust’, *Hypatia*, 18:4 (2003), 23–42.

<sup>143</sup> Marks, p. 162.



proposes her metaphor of ‘the skin of the film’ as a means of thinking about the cinematic image, her discussion resonates with *Perishables* as its compellingly palpable textures and folds of cloth and flesh draw one’s eye to the surface of the photographs. This encourages an intimacy with the images, prompting one to wonder what it would feel like to inhabit such clothing. Yet, as Marks makes clear, this is not an absolute dissolution between viewing eye and object. As she states, ‘tactile visuality is still not touch’; it requires a crucial ‘respect of difference’.<sup>144</sup> As *Perishables* prompts a necessarily imagined consideration of the sensual touch of raw meat against the surface of one’s own body, haptic visuality renders meat a texturally palpable material that can no longer be easily expelled from the self onto a distanced other.

If ‘haptic visuality implies making oneself vulnerable to the image’, *Perishables* offers an encounter that articulates the vulnerability of ageing, and of embodiment more broadly.<sup>145</sup> This term has been used to describe the series; Jefferson Hack, for example, makes repeated reference to the ‘vulnerability’ of being dressed in raw meat in a video interview with Yolaçan (even going so far as to ask if the models were scared of her).<sup>146</sup> While the ascription of vulnerability to the series ostensibly repeats the wider link between ageing and weakness, it has emerged as a key concept in recent feminist discussions of ethics alongside the rise of other related terms such as ‘exposure’, ‘dispossession’ and ‘precariousness’.<sup>147</sup> Ann Murphy focuses on the work of Judith Butler and Adriana Cavarero to show how these theorists have defined vulnerability as the openness of the subject to suffering and

---

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., pp. 192 and 193.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>146</sup> Jefferson Hack in Hack and Pinar Yolaçan, ‘Interview: Day II, 26 May 2012’ — Jefferson Hack. Pinar Yolaçan — Part I’, (2012) <<http://vimeo.com/44512424>> [accessed 26 June 2015]. See also Horyn.

<sup>147</sup> As Erinn Gilson states, ‘to age is to reveal vulnerability in the most manifest of ways’: ‘Vulnerability, Ignorance and Oppression’, *Hypatia*, 26:2 (2011), 308–32 (p. 315).

violence. Corporeal vulnerability is understood as a general condition of subjecthood, postulating ‘an incarnate subject who is vulnerable to others as a *body*’.<sup>148</sup> As the notion of a foundational vulnerability acknowledges that the self is susceptible to injury, violence and death, this becomes the ground for a relational ethics ‘attuned to the non-violent realization of mutual dependence and exposure [...] a dimension of availability to the other that is not necessarily violent’.<sup>149</sup> Vulnerability has therefore become central to an emergent humanist ethics orientated around the fundamental fragility of embodied life.

This understanding of vulnerability resonates with the fragility visualised within the frames of the *Perishables* portraits. However, given that the portraits simultaneously critique the historical instantiation of the ‘Victorian-style imperial icon’, this suggests a fundamental ambivalence surrounding the use of meat in *Perishables*. The register of vulnerability complicates the series as it positions meatiness as both exposing the pretensions of white subjectivity *and* revealing the openness of embodied life. The complexity of *Perishables* therefore lies in its play upon the connotations of ‘exposure’ so that the series critically reveals the workings of white subjectivity, yet also captures the contemporary association of the term with an ethical revelation of a shared fragility. In these portraits, offal is dehumanising — presenting the white subject as akin to a specimen — and humanising — its delicate textures positioning the ageing feminine subject as an aestheticised site of embodied precarity.

---

<sup>148</sup> Ann V. Murphy, ‘Corporeal Vulnerability and the New Humanism’, *Hypatia*, 26:3 (2011), 576–90 (p. 576). Murphy focuses on Adriana Cavarero, *Horrorism: Naming Contemporary Violence*, trans. by William McCuaig (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Cavarero, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, trans. by Paul Kottmann (London and New York: Routledge, 2000); Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004); and Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009).

<sup>149</sup> Murphy, p. 577.

What remains obscured through this is the degree to which this dual gesture depends upon the seizure of animal bodies as though akin to an ‘ostensibly transparent literality’, a kind of pre-cultural ‘raw’ materiality.<sup>150</sup> This tendency to interpret meat as a humanist gesture has long shaped the reception of meat dresses: for example, Mastai interprets *Flesh Dress* as a comment on anorexia.<sup>151</sup> To view *Perishables*, or indeed, any use of meat as an aesthetic object as simply expressive of a foundational corporeal vulnerability that grounds embodied existence presumes a ‘thereness’ to meat as an essential or profound truth. Adams’s criticism of *Perishables* for utilising older women as ‘vehicles for rotting flesh’ obscures how the series puts pressure on the abject connotations of ageing femininity. However, her observation that Yolaçan ‘creates, facilitates, and necessitates the impermanence of beings’ speaks to a more fundamental disavowal within the series whereby animal flesh is presented as though a transparent vehicle of putrefaction, finitude and death.<sup>152</sup>

Driven by disquiet at the tendency to understand vulnerability through an exclusively humanist framework, Anat Pick argues that it should instead be understood as that which ‘necessarily applies across the species divide and so delivers us beyond the domain of the human’.<sup>153</sup> In *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Fiction* (2011), Pick retains the focus upon embodiment that characterises contemporary accounts of vulnerability, whilst calling for recognition of the ‘corporeal reality of living bodies’ across the boundaries drawn between the human and the non-human. Her argument is attentive to the potential risk in vaunting vulnerability, acknowledging that animals are typically seen as ‘pure

---

<sup>150</sup> Shukin, p. 27.

<sup>151</sup> See Mastai.

<sup>152</sup> Adams in Adams and Potts, p. 17.

<sup>153</sup> Pick, *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 3.

necessity, material bodies pitted against human mindfulness and soulfulness'.<sup>154</sup>

Rather than attempt to 'rescue' animals from their materiality to assert their value alongside human subjects, she argues that humans need to acknowledge that this association of animality with 'raw' materiality is a displacement of vulnerability. Given that there is nothing intrinsically animal about material embodiment and its frailties, recognising the vulnerability shared by humans and animals is 'a powerful antidote to anthropomorphism'.<sup>155</sup> Pick's attentiveness to the displacement of fragility is valuable, yet to see meat as symbolising a shared truth about human and animal embodiment in *Perishables* still positions it as a vessel of material facticity, obscuring the crucial symbolic slippage presented by the series. After all, the use of the meat to convey the property of vulnerability (in the sense of an intrinsic facet of life) is concurrent with the transformation of animal body into property (in the sense of a possession) of the white subject, as meat is woven into an elegant costume of mortality that can be shed or worn at will. Appropriation thus becomes incorporation as the presence of the animal body as an expensive sartorial good is accompanied by the presentation of meat as a self-evident or transparent sign of material embodiment.

In playing upon the dual connotations of meatiness as a property, *Perishables* does not entirely mask the use of animal flesh within its frames, a criticism made by Randy Malamud when he argues that meat lacks 'thereness' in the portrait series.<sup>156</sup> Malamud's comment provides further evidence of how the tendency to view meat as a transparent materiality obscures the degree to which its literal and figurative resonances are always interwoven. Recognising the capacity for meatiness to coexist as matter and sign enables *Perishables* to instead gesture towards the potential

---

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>156</sup> Randy Malamud, 'Americans Do Weird Things with Animals, or, Why Did the Chicken Cross the Road?', in *Animal Encounters*, ed. by Tom Tyler and Manuela Rossini (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2009), pp. 73–98 (p. 79).

valence in laying claim to, or ‘owning’, vulnerability. This seems particularly pertinent given George Lipsitz’s observation that whiteness has a ‘possessive’ quality: ‘whiteness is invested in, like property, but it is also a means of accumulating property and keeping it from others.’<sup>157</sup> The photographic series therefore balances a complex layering of meatiness. While the use of offal as an elegant costume of mortality visualises that which cannot be fully abjected in the formation of the Victorian white feminine icon, the series also humanises meat, rendering it a material that gestures towards the fragility of (human) embodied life. However, to interpret *Perishables* solely as a revelation of human mortality or a critique of white subjectivity without tangling with the animal does not really trouble the logics of whiteness. Rather, to understand wearing meat on one’s sleeve as a costume of mortality — ‘meat put on as garment, never to be undressed as meat’ — indicates how the assertion of fleshly vulnerability as a property of embodied existence through the use of meat as fabric is dependent on disavowing the concurrent fragilisation and seizure of animal life as possession.<sup>158</sup>

### **Wearing Death, Bearing Death**

The unruly texture of offal, layered over its implied aesthetic double, ageing feminine skin, not only unsettles the monochromatic white schema of *Perishables*. It also disrupts histories of white representation by surfacing what appears an uncomfortable ‘truth’ about embodied life: its meatiness, its mortality. Grafting the racialised aesthetics of nineteenth-century ethnographic photography onto portraits

---

<sup>157</sup> George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit From Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), p. 185.

<sup>158</sup> Lewis Johnson uses this description in his analysis of *Flesh Dress*: ‘More and Less Than Objects: Inapproachable Alterity and the Work of Jana Sterbak and Rosemarie Trochal’, in *Other than Identity: The Subject, Politics and Art*, ed. by Juliet Steyn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 169–84 (p. 176).

that simultaneously evoke the reification of the white bourgeois woman as an icon of British imperialism, *Perishables* refracts this process of othering onto its figures, thereby indicating what must be disavowed in the formation of the pure and virtuous white feminine subject. The visceral textures of offal, flowing outwards onto the image, yet still clinging to the bodies of the depicted subjects, visualise the process of disavowal, thus undermining the tendency for white subjectivity to be figured as an ethereal ideal.

That this use of abject aesthetics is enacted through the figures of older women may be a source of discomfort that gives credence to those who suggest that abject art is an ambivalent form of feminist subversion. Gesturing towards the continued stigmatisation of ageing femininity as troublesome, undesirable and unproductive, the dressing of old women in meat suggests that it is they who are the ‘crack’ in the white imaginary. Read in conjunction with the work of other photographers depicting ageing femininity in the contemporary moment, the doubled textures of raw meat and ageing skin in *Perishables* encourage a haptic intimacy with the image. This embodied seeing mobilises a push-pull dynamic, making it difficult to displace meatiness onto a distanced other. *Perishables* consequently confronts histories of white representation with the fragility and finitude of embodied being through, rather than at the expense of, ageing femininity.

If this emphasis upon vulnerability risks neutralising the critical textures layered within *Perishables*, what is so complex about the series is the degree to which it gestures towards the simultaneous connotations of meatiness. Taken to register as a pre-discursive body, meat is a powerful means of suggesting vulnerability as an intrinsic facet of embodiment. However, the series also enfolds within its ripples the concurrent transformation of meat into a property or possession

of the white subject. *Perishables* therefore presents an elegant costume of mortality that is dependent upon the fragilisation of non-human others. Suggesting that there may be power in owning vulnerability, the series visualises the processes of disavowal that not only structured the reification of white femininity under nineteenth-century imperialism, but also enable contemporary art to use meat to stand in for the human body and its frailties. Chapter Two extends this discussion of the association between meat and vulnerability by examining the site-specific performance of *My New York*, orientating attention away from the maternal/animal nexus to consider the relationship between meat and the masculine body. However, in *Perishables* the animal body remains both glaringly there and exposed in its supposed 'raw' facticity, yet somehow still absent, dissolved into a sign of wealth and vulnerability. As the white ageing feminine subject wears death in *Perishables*, the animal ultimately bears it.

## Chapter Two

### Ersatz Muscularity and Spectacular Wounding

#### in Zhang Huan's *My New York*

In her introduction to *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Adams states that 'where there is (anxious) virility, one will find meat eating'.<sup>159</sup> As part of her argument outlining an indelible relation between the consumption of animals, the objectification of women and the reinforcement of patriarchy, Adams claims that meat eating is a key means by which the masculine subject asserts an (unstable) sense of domination over animals and women. If the necessary reiteration of masculine virility is enabled through the *eating* of meat, what about the *wearing* of it? Chapter One positions *Perishables* in a diffuse lineage of women artists commenting, in part, upon the conjoined abjection of the animal and maternal body through the form of the meat dress. This chapter conversely focuses on Zhang Huan's performance *My New York*, which offers the divergent spectacle of the masculine body figured as a prosthetic muscle-suit stitched from fifty kilograms of raw steak. Having gained notoriety for a provocative style of body art fashioned in the Beijing 'East Village' art community in the early 1990s, Zhang presented *My New York* at the 2002 Whitney Biennial, a year after the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks.

In the catalogue to the 2002 Whitney Biennial, the curators argue that the backdrop of 9/11 demanded 'sincerity' of the artists and performers.<sup>160</sup> Posing in his fleshy costume, the muscular contours of Zhang's meat-suit suggest masculinised strength, yet its red-raw surface evokes catastrophic injury. In keeping with the

---

<sup>159</sup> Adams, *Sexual Politics*, p. 5.

<sup>160</sup> Lawrence R. Rinder et al., *Whitney Biennial 2002: 2002 Biennial Exhibition* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002), p. 12.



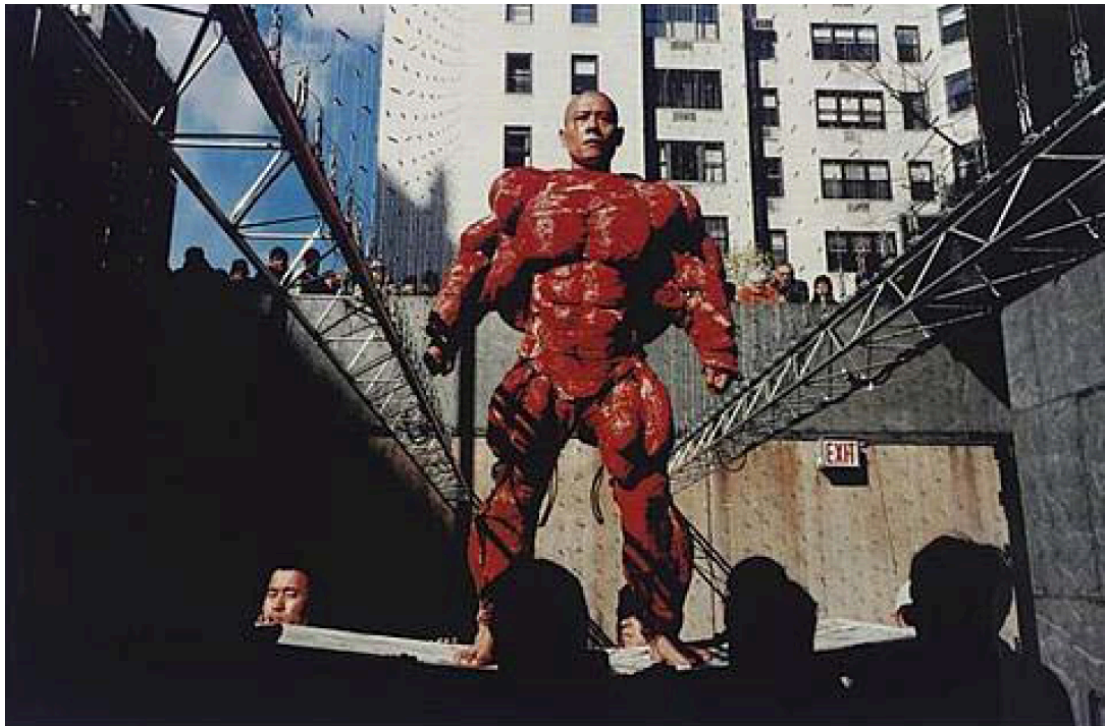
Biennial's emphasis upon the sincere, this simultaneous display of meatiness as muscularity and vulnerability was praised as a 'universal appeal to all suffering humanity' in a post-9/11 climate.<sup>161</sup> The wounded appearance of Zhang's costume has been particularly received as an earnest, compassionate gesture towards the citizens of New York, evoking the conventional definition of sincerity as an external expression of an internal truth.<sup>162</sup> This chapter argues, however, that this reception obscures the extent to which the observed contradiction between meatiness as fragility and fortitude has long been understood as a tension inherent in the fraught relationship between masculinity and spectacle. It also suggests that reading meatiness as generative of a transparent affective appeal of wounded vulnerability disavows the suit's simultaneous testament to our capacity to wound through its use of animal flesh. Rather than simply reiterate *My New York* as a universal humanist gesture grounded in candour and compassion, this chapter argues that Zhang's performance offers a complex, even ironic, negotiation of meat as a material deeply implicated in the historical construction of masculine archetypes in US culture.

---

<sup>161</sup> Xiaoping Lin, *Children of Marx and Coca Cola: Chinese Avant-Garde Art and Independent Cinema* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010), p. 85.

<sup>162</sup> Ernst van Alpha and Mieke Bal, 'Introduction', in *The Rhetoric of Sincerity*, ed. by van Alpha, Bal and Carel Smith (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 1–16.

## Ersatz Muscularity



**Figure 5**

*My New York*. Performance, Whitney Museum, New York (2002)

Photograph: Zhang Huan

Held in the year following the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks, the 2002 Whitney Biennial was positioned in the accompanying catalogue as a forum for ‘sincerity’. In declaring ‘the need for art to perform some greater role than mere decoration or ironic critique’, the curators implicitly contrasted the earnest gesture with artistic modes such as the ornamental, the ironic and the parodic.<sup>163</sup> Zhang’s performance of *My New York*, staged as part of the Biennial, was perceived to have embodied this public mood, heralded as a sincere display of corporeal fragility.<sup>164</sup> Performed in the

---

<sup>163</sup> Rinder, p. 12.

<sup>164</sup> See Aloï, *Art and Animals*, p. 53; Lin, p. 85; and Richard Vine, *New China: New Art* (Slovakia: Prestel, 2008), p. 106.

basement courtyard of the Whitney, *My New York* commenced with Zhang being carried out on a flat board by Chinese migrant workers from Zhang's birthplace of Henan province, his body concealed under a white sheet. Figure 5 displays the figure revealed after the removal of the shroud: a staunchly erect Zhang clad in a muscle-suit of raw steak covering his entire body apart from his hands, face and bare feet. Following the sustained posing of his body, Zhang ascended to the streets of New York to the sound of chiming Tibetan bells, whereupon he invited members of the public to release white doves into the air — a Buddhist symbol of peace — before returning to the courtyard to end the performance.

As *My New York* became viewed as a compassionate gesture of solidarity in the aftermath of 9/11, this reception marked a significant shift from Zhang's pre-existing reputation as a controversial figure in the 1990s Beijing 'East Village' art community. Prior to his move to New York in 1998, Zhang was a key participant in provocative 'Apartment Art' performances, staged in small private spaces to avoid the condemnatory gaze of the state authorities. While Mikala Tai has warned against assuming that 'the body' has only recently emerged as a subject within Chinese art, a claim she views as being shaped by Western understandings of corporeal presence, she joins Gao Minglu in identifying the early 1990s as a period that witnessed the development of a visceral performance art.<sup>165</sup> The artworks performed by Zhang during this period have been described as 'naked, self-harming, blood-dripping, anarchist performances' that led to frequent clashes with the authorities.<sup>166</sup>

From *12m<sup>2</sup>* (1994), for which Zhang covered himself in fish guts and honey before sitting on a public lavatory as flies accumulated on his skin, to *65kg* (1994), in

---

<sup>165</sup> Gao Minglu, ed., *Inside/Out: New Chinese Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) and Mikala Tai, 'Branded and Plated: The Globalised Chinese Body', *Intersections*, 23 (2010) <<http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue23/tai.htm>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>166</sup> Carol Yinghua Lu, 'How it Appears', *Frieze*, 129 (March 2010) <[http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/how\\_it\\_appears/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/how_it_appears/)> [accessed 26 June 2015].

which he was suspended in the air with a plastic catheter inserted in his veins so that blood could drip and boil on a hot plate beneath him, Zhang's performances generated his controversial reputation as a 'masochistic' performer with a 'macho self-image'.<sup>167</sup>



**Figure 6**

*12m<sup>2</sup>*. Performance, Beijing, China (1994)

Photograph: Zhang Huan

---

<sup>167</sup> Katie Hill, 'Why the Manic Grin? Hysterical Bodies: Contemporary Art as (Male) Trauma in Post-Cultural Revolution China', in *Burden or Legacy: From the Chinese Cultural Revolution to Contemporary Art*, ed. by Jiehong Jiang (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007), pp. 71–84 (p. 81).

Katie Hill describes *12m<sup>2</sup>* as ‘a masculine display of muscle-power which has an impressive aura [...] of heroism and magnitude’.<sup>168</sup> As Richard Vine similarly states that ‘the Zhang Huan of record is bald, meaty, pronouncedly masculine’, such appraisals underscore Zhang’s formidable reputation as an artistic provocateur prior to his move to the USA in 1998.<sup>169</sup> Zhang’s role in the 1990s Chinese avant-garde scene has been inflated by his subsequent transformation from ‘bad boy artist’ to commercial superstar following his sojourn in the USA between 1998 and 2005. The use of a photograph of Zhang’s group performance *To Raise the Water Level in a Fishpond* (1997) as exhibition poster and catalogue cover for the ground-breaking 1998 *Inside/Out: New Chinese Art* exhibition helped to introduce the artist to a Western audience.<sup>170</sup> However, it was the performance of *My New York* that served as a crucial catalyst in securing his international reputation and considerable personal wealth.<sup>171</sup>

One of four photographs documenting *My New York* on Zhang’s official website, Figure 5 does not particularly break from this macho reputation. Its angle centralises Zhang’s erect figure, whilst the downward-facing audience is miniaturised in the background. The suit displays a taut muscularity with Zhang’s stern gaze looking out impassively above the viewer’s sightline. In the text that accompanied *My*

---

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>169</sup> Vine, p. 85.

<sup>170</sup> Although Chinese art had been displayed abroad before 1998, *Inside/Out: New Chinese Art*, co-organised by New York’s Asia Society and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, was a formative introduction of work by artists from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and the Chinese diaspora to US audiences: see Minglu.

<sup>171</sup> Upon returning to China in 2006, Zhang Huan established a studio factory in Shanghai, employing over two hundred workers to produce his paintings and sculptures. Evidenced by interviews with publications like *Official Ferrari Magazine*, Zhang’s wealth is seen to have neutralised his dissident status. Questions have also been raised over the ethics of his factory system in parallel with concerns over the outsourcing of artistic labour by other ‘superstar’ artists, including Damien Hirst and Jeff Koons. For more on the career trajectory of Zhang from painter to performance artist to ‘factory boss’, see Lin; Barbara Pollock, ‘Art’s New Superpower’, *Vanity Fair*, (December 2007) <<http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2007/12/chineseart200712>> [accessed 26 June 2015]; and Winnie Won Yin Wang, *Van Gogh on Demand: China and the Readymade* (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). See also Lisa Movius, ‘Free Spirit’, *Official Ferrari Magazine*, (16 January 2012) <<http://magazine.ferrari.com/blog/2012/01/free-spirit/>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

*New York*, Zhang claims that he was attempting to become ‘Mr Olympic Body Builder’, a revealing comparison given that this figure has been understood as an archetype of hyper-masculinity.<sup>172</sup> The hardened, ‘built’ body of supreme strength is visually associated with the realm of spectacle, yet is simultaneously invested in averting attention from its position as the object of the gaze. As Dyer explains, figurations of the hyper-masculine body are typically defined by ‘clenched fists, the bulging muscles, the hardened jaw’, as well as stares away from the camera to avert the potential ‘violation’ of being observed.<sup>173</sup>

Such features could easily describe Figure 5, which presents a pose of sculpted muscularity whilst Zhang stares elsewhere and, crucially, above: exemplary of the masculine spectacle in which the subject is ‘looked at but pretending not to be’.<sup>174</sup> The impassivity of Zhang’s face furthermore suggests the ‘subduing of affect’ that Klaus Theweleit, in a very different context, associates with the ‘armoured’ body as a contrast to the excess emotionality historically attributed to femininity.<sup>175</sup> The presence of these ‘phallic symbols’ is bolstered by the use of steak as material for the suit, recalling the metonymic relation between meat and masculinity whereby the incorporation of meat by the male body is believed to provide heightened psychic and physical power.<sup>176</sup> Zhang’s costume of meaty muscle, given the ‘prestige of stature’

---

<sup>172</sup> Zhang Huan, ‘My New York’, *Zhang Huan*, (2002)

<<http://www.zhanghuan.com/ShowWorkContent.asp?id=19&iParentID=16&mid=1>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>173</sup> Dyer, ‘Don’t Look Now: The Male Pin-Up’, in *The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality*, ed. by Mandy Merck (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 265–76 (pp. 274–75 and 276).

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies: Volume 1: Woman, Floods, Bodies, History* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987), p. 302. While Theweleit analyses the phantasies that shaped the consciousness of the German *Freikorps* during World War II, Dyer argues that hyper-masculine figures are still seen as ‘perhaps bordering on the fascist’: ‘Don’t Look Now’, p. 273.

<sup>176</sup> See Adams, *Sexual Politics*; Fiddes; Jovian Parry, ‘Gender and Slaughter in Popular Gastronomy’, *Feminism and Psychology*, 20:3 (2010), 381–96; and Potts and Jovian Parry, ‘Vegan Sexuality: Challenging Heteronormative Masculinity Through Meat-Free Sex’, *Feminism and Psychology*, 20:1 (2010), 53–72.

through his erect pose, contoured shape and distant gaze, presents a familiar figuration of hyper-masculinity.<sup>177</sup>

Zhang's pose and suit was not only compared to that of a bodybuilder, but also to the figure of the comic book superhero: a body given superhuman powers conventionally signalled by a skintight, lightweight, armour-like costume.<sup>178</sup> In her examination of popular tropes that circulated in post-9/11 media, Susan Faludi cites a special issue of Marvel comics in which Spiderman defers to the firemen of New York as the 'true' heroes of 9/11 as an exemplar of the desire to 're-masculinise' national discourse following the World Trade Center attacks.<sup>179</sup> *My New York* was not the only performance in the 2002 Whitney Biennial to invoke a comic book figure. A superhero, albeit one on its knees, was at the heart of William Pope. L's *The Great White Way* (2002), a nine-year crawl for twenty-two miles along Broadway from lower Manhattan to the Bronx.<sup>180</sup> Since the late 1970s, Pope. L's works have interrogated the potent, fetishised symbols of economic and racialised power that permeate US culture: for example, in the performance *Eating the Wall Street Journal* (2000), he ingested and vomited strips of the iconic US newspaper over several days whilst seated on a toilet, his skin dusted with flour. Although Pope. L has staged over thirty crawls since 1978, his particular choice of a capeless superhero costume for *The*

---

<sup>177</sup> 'Prestige of stature' is taken from Lacan, 'Some Reflections on the Ego', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 34 (1953), 11–17 (p. 15). In this account of the 'Mirror Stage', Lacan argues that when the infant begins to recognise itself in the mirror and/or the eyes of others, this incites spatial identification with the image of bodily coherence (the *imago*). It is to 'the prestige of stature' that the infant is drawn in a process of mis-recognition that conditions the infant's entrance into subjectivity and remains imprinted on the ego. Zhang's posture resonates with Lacan's description of the *imago*.

<sup>178</sup> See Lin, p. 84 and Vine, p. 106.

<sup>179</sup> See Susan Faludi, *The Terror Dream: What 9/11 Revealed about America* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007), pp. 46–50 and 72. For a more nuanced comparison of DC and Marvel comics released following 9/11, see Jason Bainbridge, "'Worlds within Worlds': The Role of Superheroes in the Marvel and DC Universes", in *The Contemporary Comic Book Superhero*, ed. by Angela Ndaliansi (New York and London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 64–85.

<sup>180</sup> 'The Great White Way' is the colloquial term for the Midtown section of Broadway encompassing the Theatre District (42<sup>nd</sup>–53<sup>rd</sup> Streets), coined in 1902 as a reference to the myriad lights that illuminated the area.



*Great White Way* received particular attention as ‘the clearest and most iconic images’ of his longstanding project.<sup>181</sup>



**Figure 7**

William Pope. L. *The Great White Way* (2002)

Photograph: Pruznick/Grey

While Faludi utilises a comic book example to evidence a resurgent investment in heroic masculinity post-9/11, Pope. L’s horizontality and strained face, as shown in Figure 7, contrast with the effortless upward velocity usually attributed to the superhero. Instead, Pope. L engages in ‘reimagining the fantasy of the all-American superhero’s skyscraper-bounding invulnerability as a flightless act of

---

<sup>181</sup> Ross Simonini, ‘White People are the Interior’, *Interview*, (n.d.) <http://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/william-popel#> [accessed 26 June 2015].



glacially paced struggle'.<sup>182</sup> The ground-level nature of Pope. L's performance resonates with the later stages of *My New York*, in which Zhang descends from his statuesque posing to walk the streets of Manhattan. Yet, while Pope. L abnegates the usual valour of the superhero in favour of his gruelling 'act of prostration', Zhang never fully loses the verticality of his performance due to the rigidly upright muscularity of his costume.<sup>183</sup> By contrast with *The Great White Way*, Figure 5 offers a more earnest evocation of the superhuman strength and fortitude of the comic book hero through the vertical form of Zhang's skintight meat-suit.

Unlike Pope. L's prostrate crawl, the erectness of Zhang's statuesque figure also suggests scalar equivalence between his performing body and the buildings extending in the backdrop of Figure 5. The category of the gigantic typically operates in the register of the collective, the public and the historical.<sup>184</sup> The visual correspondence between Zhang's performing body and the high-rise buildings further positions *My New York* as a response to the World Trade Center attacks, providing a galvanising antithesis to the spectacular images of disintegrating skyscrapers through which 9/11 was represented in the global media. Repeated footage of tumbling buildings is seen to have prompted a reinvestment in architectural monumentality across a number of different artistic genres, a visual preoccupation that served as a corollary to the wider bolstering of masculine 'moral, cultural and financial authority' in an anxiety-ridden post-9/11 climate.<sup>185</sup> Diane Negra, for example, examines a number of 'chick flicks' that invoke 'a linkage between the open contemplation of

---

<sup>182</sup> James Trainor, 'Ain't No Such Thing as Superman', *Frieze*, 83 (May 2004) <[http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/aint\\_no\\_such\\_thing\\_as\\_superman/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/aint_no_such_thing_as_superman/)> [accessed 26 June 2015]. For more on the relationship between the superhero and flight, see Scott Bukatman, *Matters of Gravity: Special Effects and Superman in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2003).

<sup>183</sup> Rinder, p. 172.

<sup>184</sup> See Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1993), p. xii.

<sup>185</sup> Diane Negra, 'Structural Integrity, Historical Reversion, and the Post-9/11 Chick Flick', *Feminist Media Studies*, 8:1 (2008), 51–68 (p. 51).

urban structural integrity and the rehabilitation of masculinity’ as the resolidification of the New York skyline became a metaphor for the restoration of male fortitude.<sup>186</sup> While Zhang’s performance operates in a very different medium and genre, Figure 5 not only shares in this move to ‘conjoin male integrity with the mastery of buildings’, but also resonates with the wider reinvestment in figurations of ‘hard’ masculinity in US culture post-9/11.<sup>187</sup> Standing erect in his meat-suit of bulging muscles in front of a backdrop of ascending buildings, Zhang evokes this spirit of phallic resurgence through the assertion of meaty monumentality.

### **Fortification/Mortification**

While Zhang’s suit suggests a hyper-masculine archetype invested in superhuman fortitude, commentaries on *My New York* observe a concurrent fragility to the performance grounded in the costume’s appearance, interpreting the raw steak less as a metonym for strength and substance than as a palpable body-sized wound. In keeping with the companion text in which Zhang observes that ‘something may appear to be formidable but [...] sometimes such things may be extremely fragile’, Zhang’s meat-suit has been described as ‘flayed’, an exposure of open viscera.<sup>188</sup> Richard Fulmer’s description captures the angrily red surface of Zhang’s costume, its vivid colouring giving it freshness as though the skin has only been recently removed. While the raw surface does not quite generate the sensuous intimacy of ‘haptic visuality’, in Figure 8 the bright shade of the suit and its bulging form provoke a

---

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. 59. See also Faludi; Jeffrey Melnick, *9/11 Culture: American Under Construction* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); and Claire Sisco King, ‘The Man Inside: Trauma, Gender and the Nation in *The Brave One*’, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 27:2 (2010), 111–30.

<sup>188</sup> See Zhang and Richard Fulmer, ‘Carne Diem: What Meat Art Can Tell Us about Life and Death’, *Meatpaper*, 5 (September 2008) <[http://www.meatpaper.com/articles/2010/0129\\_fulmer.html](http://www.meatpaper.com/articles/2010/0129_fulmer.html)> [accessed 26 June 2015].

*spectacular tactility* as its inflated scale is bolstered by the palpable textures of its contours.<sup>189</sup>



**Figure 8**

*My New York*. Performance, Whitney Museum, New York (2002)

Photograph: Zhang Huan

Through this simultaneous display of fortitude and fragility, *My New York* is less a reiteration or celebration of a resurgent heroic masculinity than a pathos-ridden

---

<sup>189</sup> Ananda Shankar Chakrabarty uses the phrase ‘spectacular tactility’ in ‘Soulage’s Paintings and Kuspit’s Criticism’, in *Dialectical Conversions: Donald Kuspit’s Art Criticism*, ed. by David Craven and Brian Winkenweder (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), pp. 173–89 (p. 173). He deploys it to evoke the haptic textures of Soulage’s ‘beyond black’ paintings; here, it describes *My New York*, which operates on the scale of the spectacular, but gestures towards the intimacy of haptic vision.

performance. Xiaoping Lin argues that *My New York*'s enfolding of fantastic strength and wounding in one body works 'to imply a much less "heroic" reality' than that usually suggested by the superhero.<sup>190</sup> Approaching the artwork through his focus on the use of animals in contemporary art, Giovanni Aloï acknowledges that Zhang's hyper-masculine figure suggests 'machismo', evoking a relationship between masculinity and animals grounded in a naturalised 'violent subjugation of nature'. However, he distinguishes Zhang's performance from work by other male artists by emphasising the vulnerability communicated by Zhang's meat-suit.<sup>191</sup> Concurring with Zhang's own description of the performance as a compassionate gesture, Aloï sees the 'intrinsic and essential contradiction' between meat as 'a symbol of strength and one of extreme frailty and vulnerability' as operating outside the register of masculine triumphalism. Instead, *My New York* indicates how 'the use of meat in contemporary art can transcend the signifier predominantly bound to the patriarchal'.<sup>192</sup> Aloï's comment alludes to the relationship between meat, masculinity and muscle criticised by those such as Adams in which meat eating is believed to secure masculine virility. However, the 'meatification' figured by Zhang's body is not simply a fortification of hyper-masculine power, but also a performed mortification: the display of oneself as a palpable wound.

What Aloï terms 'an intrinsic and essential contradiction' within Zhang's performance is a dynamic that has long characterised the fraught relation between

---

<sup>190</sup> Lin, p. 84; see also Vine, p. 106.

<sup>191</sup> Aloï cites Huang Yong Ping's *Theatre of the World* (1993) and Adel Abdessemed's *Don't Trust Me* (2008) as two problematic artworks by male artists. *Theatre of the World* displays a turtle-shaped cage containing live tarantulas, scorpions, millipedes, geckos, crickets and small snakes. It has been read as showing an antagonistic, conflict-ridden view of the natural world. *Don't Trust Me* is comprised of six two-second videos showing the slaughter of a goat, pig, cow and deer using a sledgehammer. The 2008 display of the videos at the San Francisco Art Institute was shut down after five days due to protests, although the title invites viewers to question the staging of the footage: see Aloï in Joshua Katcher, 'Art and Animals: An Interview with Giovanni Aloï', *The Discerning Brute*, (4 March 2013) <<http://www.thediscerningbrute.com/2013/03/04/art-animals-an-interview-with-giovanni-aloi/>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

masculinity and spectacle. The figures referenced by the costume — the superhero and the ‘Olympic Body Builder’ — have been read as convergences of ‘hard and soft masculinity’.<sup>193</sup> Donna Peberdy observes that the superhero is always accompanied by a more human, flawed alter ego, ‘softer, and more vulnerable in comparison’.<sup>194</sup> This duality is just as pronounced in analyses of the male bodybuilder. Discussing the ‘paper-thin’ appearance of the bodybuilder’s skin, Niall Richardson argues that the translucency of the bodily surface is desired as it accentuates the visibility and size of the muscles. Labelling such bodies as ‘cut’ or ‘ripped’ offers an apt description for the degree to which the skin consequently appears ‘flayed [...] by a surgeon’s scalpel’.<sup>195</sup> While Colin Harrison describes Zhang as looking like ‘a bodybuilder whose skin has been torn off’, Richard Conway observes that the bodily surface of the male bodybuilder already evokes ‘flayed animals in an abattoir’ due to the translucent and fragile appearance of ‘built’ skin.<sup>196</sup> To praise *My New York* for offering a contradictory display of hyper-masculinity and its antithesis obscures a dynamic long seen to lie at the heart of the masculine spectacle: the ever-present paradox of meatiness as plenitude and lack.

Yet, what is striking about the reception of *My New York* is that the meatiness of the costume has been largely interpreted not as the visualisation of a contradictory dynamic, but rather as a transparent sign of human vulnerability and trauma. Although the statuesque posing of Zhang in Figure 5 suggests the ‘subduing of affect’ through Zhang’s deadpan gaze, readings of *My New York* see the meaty costume as

---

<sup>193</sup> Donna Peberdy, *Masculinity and Film Performance: Male Angst in Contemporary American Cinema* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), p. 110.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Niall Richardson, ‘The Queer Activity of Extreme Body-Building: Gender Dissidence, Auto-Eroticism and Hysteria’, *Social Semiotics*, 14:1 (2004), 49–65 (p. 60).

<sup>196</sup> Colin Harrison, *American Culture in the 1990s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 166 and Richard Conway in Richardson, ‘Queer Activity’, p. 60.

wielding a potent affective appeal. This perspective resonates with Amelia Jones's discussion of the address of the wounded body. Jones argues that the spectacular staging of physical wounding in live art gains political import when it produces an intercorporeal dialogue between audience and performer. For Jones, this dialogue is dependent upon the necessary narcissism of the viewer. As she states, it is 'the perception of the wound as having occurred in an actual body — and thus as potentially occurring in our own body in the future' that prompts the working through of fears regarding pain and penetration.<sup>197</sup> To evidence this, she describes her reaction to the live art practitioner Ron Athey's re-enactment of the performance *Solar Anus* in 2006, in which Athey pulls a string of beads from his anus and attaches hooks to his face: 'I felt flayed, exposed and aware of my own limits, my own capacity to experience the effects of wounding as I flinched away from his bodily fluids.'<sup>198</sup> Readings of *My New York* similarly interpret Zhang's performance as a powerful affective exposure through his display of wounded viscera that generates an intercorporeal connection between performer and audience.

Jones's particular stress on Athey's performance as engendering awareness of her own embodied fragility evokes the onus placed on Zhang's costume as a communication of injury. This interpretation was fully in keeping with the context of the performance, which was staged in the year following the 9/11 attacks: an event typically spoken of through the frame of national trauma. While Zhang's performance could be read as utilising his body to personify the 'wound' seen to have been inflicted on New York, it also speaks to other interrogations of trauma post-9/11, in particular Butler's *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2005).

*Precarious Life* emerged as a direct response to the World Trade Center attacks,

---

<sup>197</sup> Amelia Jones, 'Performing the Wounded Body: Pain, Affect and the Radical Relationality of Meaning', *Parallax*, 15:4 (2009), 45–67 (p. 51).

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

asking ‘what form political reflection and deliberation ought to take if we take injurability and aggression as two points of departure for political life’?<sup>199</sup> Butler’s reference to ‘injurability and aggression’ speaks to the dual connotations of Zhang’s meat-suit, which evokes both hyper-masculine strength and fragility. However, just as Butler proceeds to stress the exposure of embodied vulnerability as the grounds for a relational ethics rooted in the recognition of the subject’s openness to injury, so too has reception of Zhang’s costume been read as a reminder of the shared capacity to be wounded. As in Chapter One, the use of meat as fabric becomes a way of depicting and communicating a vulnerability to embodied life, yet in the reception to *My New York* this becomes strikingly divested of its gendered implications to be received as an explicitly humanist gesture.

The use of meat as a sign of human vulnerability does, however, introduce a crucial difference between Jones’s discussion of the wounded body in live performance and *My New York*. Jones observes that there is a stark distinction between bodies being wounded against their will in performance and subjects participating in spectacles of self-injury in the artistic space. To evidence this gulf, Jones references Adel Abdessemed’s work *Don’t Trust Me* (2008), the controversial video depicting animal slaughter that Aloï contrasts unfavourably with Zhang’s performance as a ‘macho’ display of violence against animals.<sup>200</sup> Jones implicitly criticises Abdessemed’s piece as evidencing the extent to which animal rather than human bodies tend to be involuntarily hurt for artistic purposes. Jones’s attentiveness to the ethics of utilising animals in performance raises pertinent questions about the use of meat to evoke injury in *My New York*. To read Zhang as communicating pathos through the palpability of his wounded costume obscures the annihilated animal body

---

<sup>199</sup> Butler, *Precarious Life*, p. xii.

<sup>200</sup> See Aloï in Katcher.

that is used to generate the performance's 'universal appeal to all suffering humanity'.<sup>201</sup> One must disavow the capacity to wound enfolded in the performance — not only the implicit aggressivity of hyper-masculine muscularity, but also the presence of the slaughtered animal — to read *My New York* solely as the inhabitation and communication of a wounded *human* body.

While Jones crucially distinguishes the wounding of animal bodies from human bodies in performance, it is nonetheless striking that she uses the term 'flayed' to describe her response to Athey's *Solar Anus*. This word is also deployed by Fulmer when describing Zhang's costume, whilst Richardson utilises it to capture the appearance of the bodybuilder's 'cut' or 'ripped' skin.<sup>202</sup> What is so notable about the particular use of 'flayed' is that it refers to a process integral to turning bodies into meat, describing the removal of skin from flesh. Eleanor Heartney appears to explicitly connect animal slaughter and the material of Zhang's costume when she states that 'its red raw surface [...] suggested a flayed body and reduced the artist to an almost animal-like condition'.<sup>203</sup> Yet, she still collapses the meat-suit into a symbol of wounding. Her specific reference to the costume as having 'suggested a flayed body' elides the fact that the suit is made of skinned animal flesh in the form of raw steak; to this extent, the performance used, rather than simply implied, a flayed body. Her reference to the meat costume as rendering Zhang 'almost animal-like' is furthermore significant in that it gives the suit bestial connotations without quite breaching the species border.

---

<sup>201</sup> Lin, p. 85.

<sup>202</sup> See Fulmer and Richardson, p. 60.

<sup>203</sup> Eleanor Heartney, 'Becoming the Body', *Zhang Huan*, (2007) <<http://www.zhanghuan.com/ShowText.asp?id=30&sClassID=1>> [accessed 26 June 2015].



The tendency to equate performances of wounding with ‘flaying’ implies that disturbing the integrity of the bodily surface concurrently disrupts the division between the human and the animal, even if this is not a complete breach. The idea that injuries to the skin disturb the human/animal divide is one that is embedded in Dider Anzieu’s discussion of ‘the skin ego’ in which he builds upon Freud’s observation that ‘the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego: it is not merely a surface entity but is itself the projection of a surface’.<sup>204</sup> Anzieu argues that the skin ego is crucial to the psychic topography of the subject, acting as both ‘a bridge and an intermediary screen between the psyche and the body, the world and other psyches’.<sup>205</sup> While the ideal skin ego maintains the subject as a bounded and autonomous entity, the need for it to be ‘permeable and impermeable [...] solid and fragile’ jeopardises its capacity to act as a secure, enveloping container.<sup>206</sup> Phantasy therefore plays a central role in psychic attempts to ‘repair’ the instability of the skin, functioning as “‘epidermal armouring’” as a defence mechanism against anxieties, but also a means to prevent dissolution, shapelessness and loss’.<sup>207</sup> Steven Pile’s reference to the psychic ‘armouring’ of the skin ego summarises the ‘narcissist’ position in Anzieu’s account in which the subject projects an ‘*ersatz* muscularity’ to act as a phantasmatic reinforcement of the skin.<sup>208</sup> However, Anzieu concurrently outlines a ‘masochist’ position by which the subject’s anxiety at the possibility of disunity becomes channelled into preemptive defensive phantasies of bruised and damaged skin.

---

<sup>204</sup> Freud, *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Penguin, 1984), p. 364.

<sup>205</sup> Didier Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, trans. by Chris Turner (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 9.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>207</sup> Steven Pile, ‘Spatialities of Skin: The Chafing of Skin, Ego and Second Skins in T.E. Lawrence’s *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*’, *Body and Society*, 17:4 (2011), 57–81 (p. 62).

<sup>208</sup> Anzieu, pp. 193–4.

That these masochistic and narcissistic positions are not mutually exclusive, but are instead ‘alienating and complementary’ in their shared drive to mend the psychic experience of tears in the skin ego, provides one rationale for the convergence of armoured and flayed skin in *My New York*, as both work to reassure the subject of its boundaries in moments of fragility.<sup>209</sup> While Anzieu argues the skin ego is projected solely by the human subject, this assertion is complicated by his claim that phantasies of skinly assault are ‘borne out of the observation of domestic animals being slaughtered and prepared for the table’.<sup>210</sup> This statement references animal slaughter — the creation of meat — as the origin for the phantasies associated with the masochist position. The implied threat to one’s humanness in attacks on the skin is heightened by Anzieu’s use of the Greek myth of Marsyas as one reference point, the satyr (a hybrid of man and goat) punished by the god Apollo by being flayed alive. Referring to the myriad artistic works that depict the scene of Marsyas’s punishment, Anzieu argues that the pain and humiliation caused by wounds to the skin ego, whether self-inflicted or otherwise, give humans a ‘negative verticality’, which challenges their upright position as outlined, for example, in Freud’s *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930) and Lacan’s account of the ‘I formation’.<sup>211</sup> While Anzieu stresses that this negative verticality is never quite equivalent to the horizontal status of animals, his positioning of animal slaughter as the origin for human phantasies of wounding, as well as his use of Marsyas as example, suggest that assaults upon the integrity of the skin disrupt the species border, bringing the categories of the human and the animal into proximity.

Aloi’s reading of *My New York* shares the implications of Anzieu’s work when he states that ‘meat, on the inside, is where the animal and human merge

---

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>211</sup> See Freud, *Civilisation*, p. 46, n. 1 and Lacan, ‘Some Reflections’, p. 15.

indiscernibly, seamless in colour and texture, formally overlap, indissolubly'.<sup>212</sup> Aloï argues of the human/animal divide that 'it is by removing the skin, along with its prescribed values, that roles are allowed to flux and merge'.<sup>213</sup> While Aloï does not elaborate significantly upon this 'flux' in Zhang's performance, his observation that the permeability of the species border can be highlighted by engagements with the bodily surface speaks to a recurrent corporeal thematic across Zhang's oeuvre that is predicated upon frequent encounters with living animals (dogs, horses, pigs, scorpions and doves), as well as animal body parts.



**Figure 9**

*½*. Beijing, China (1998)

Photograph: Zhang Huan



**Figure 10**

*Homeland*. China (2001)

Photograph: Zhang Huan

One example is the photographic triptych *½* (1998). Displayed without a confirmed order, one of the photographs displays the naked upper torso and face of

<sup>212</sup> Aloï, *Art and Animals*, p. 53.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Zhang, covered in Chinese script. A second shows him in a similar pose without the writing, encased only in the ribcage of a pig, meat and gristle still clinging to the bones. The third image of the series, shown in Figure 9, offers a convergence of these photographs by presenting Zhang covered in the ribs and the inked-on symbols. If the removal of the skin partially unravels the human/animal divide and the use of language remains one of the capacities presumed to secure it, this portrait series manifests two terms through which the species barrier has been disrupted *and* constructed. Zhang has furthermore engaged with living animals, for example, in *Window* (2004), which presents a series of nine photographs showing Zhang in various poses with a chained-up mule. However, the performance of *Homeland* (2001), in which Zhang covered himself in raw meat, offers the most obvious companion piece to *My New York*. Figure 10 depicts Zhang in the resulting meat costume. Its appearance contrasts notably with the red-raw bulging muscles shown in the later *My New York*; the surface of this costume is ragged and pale, the meat appearing piecemeal rather than a seamless skin of meaty armour. Furthermore, the bestial connotations of *Homeland* are made explicit through the inclusion of a spindly, curving tail. Minimally documented beyond Figure 10, *Homeland* was originally performed in Shandong province as a comment on the growing unemployment and impoverishment of its farming community.<sup>214</sup> While the animality of *My New York* remains largely implicit, these artworks show how Zhang's performances have often been dependent on intimate encounters with animal bodies, both living and dead.

Zhang's recurrent use of animal bodies throughout an artistic career focused on the corporeal as an overarching thematic demonstrates the equation of animality

---

<sup>214</sup> See O'Hagan, 'Auto Focus: Self-Portraits and the Art of Hiding in Plain Sight, *Guardian*, (8 August 2010) <<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2010/aug/08/photography-art>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

with the embodied and material. Wolfe provides a rationale for this tendency when he observes that the emergence of the human is predicated upon ‘transcending the bonds of materiality and embodiment’.<sup>215</sup> Through this logic, engagements with animal bodies, such as through artistic performance, offer a powerful challenge to the repression of the corporeal. However, they can also position the animal body as akin to a fetish object through the hope that ‘in reconnecting with animals, we are also reconnecting with our embodied being’.<sup>216</sup> If encounters with animals can become privileged for enabling sensual ‘reconnection’ with the aspects of human embodiment perceived to be experientially lacking, this is implicit in Aloi’s discussion of the use of meat in visual art. Appraising the ‘flux’ generated by the removal of skin, he suggests that flayed bodies aim at offering a ‘more *immediately real* engagement’.<sup>217</sup> While Aloi is highly attentive to the ethical questions raised by the use of animals in contemporary art, the equation of skinless bodies with ‘a fresher and less mediated connection to nature’ positions meat as generative of affective transparency.<sup>218</sup>

To value meat as a means of generating immediacy or providing a ‘fresh’ sensual encounter stripped of mediation not only re-aligns it as a site of transparent revelation and knowledge, but also suggests a proprietary relation whereby meat is presumed to function as a means for the human to reconnect with ‘embodied being’. Positioning Zhang’s costume as a universal humanist appeal disavows the seizure of the animal body inherent in this gesture. Furthermore, it directs attention away from the productive frictions between the two connotations of meatiness stitched into the performance. Rather than elide this fractious tension by positing it as an unmediated sign of human trauma that alludes to animality without quite breaching the species

---

<sup>215</sup> Wolfe, *What is Post-Humanism?*, p. xii.

<sup>216</sup> Vint, p. 9.

<sup>217</sup> Aloi specifically makes these comments in reference to the skinned carcasses displayed by the artist Janis Kounellis in *Untitled —1989* (1989): *Art and Animals*, p. 54.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

border, meat can be implicated in the historical construction of masculine archetypes. While *My New York* does not simply reiterate masculine triumphalism, this is not because Zhang embodies the pathos of human vulnerability. Instead, the costume generates friction, rendering it less a sincere and earnest presentation of an inner truth than a complex interrogation of the interplay of masculine archetypes through the use of meat as a historically loaded material.

### **Resemblance and Menace**

What has been missing in existing analyses of the muscularity of Zhang's costume and its relation to the bodybuilder and the superhero is the extent to which these are historically racialised figures. Pope. L's aforementioned *The Great White Way* gains much of its power from speaking back to the figuration of the iconic superheroes — Spiderman, Superman and Batman — as white males. Although studies have responded critically to the privileging of white masculinity within the comic book canon, the perception that the superhero remains an embodiment of a white saviour mentality still shapes perceptions of the genre.<sup>219</sup> In an associated vein, Dyer argues that the bodybuilder in cinematic representation is one of the few figures through which the naked or near-naked white male has been rendered iconic. Focusing on three cycles of cinematic representation — Tarzan films, Italian peplum films and 1980s 'muscle stars' — Dyer outlines how the bodybuilder figure typically 'articulates white masculinity' as its formal display is inflected with classical and colonial modes of representation.<sup>220</sup> Although Dyer acknowledges that the practice of bodybuilding is a racially diverse field, 'many of the formal properties of the built

---

<sup>219</sup> See, for example, Adilifu Nama, 'Brave Black Worlds: Black Superheroes as Science Fiction Ciphers', in *The Black Imagination: Science Fiction and the Speculative*, ed. by Sandra Jackson and Julie Moody-Freeman (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 7–18.

<sup>220</sup> Dyer, *White*, p. 148.

body carry connotations of whiteness: it is ideal, hard, achieved, wealthy, hairless and tanned'.<sup>221</sup> While black males figure in the narratives Dyer examines, they have historically been utilised to provide a naturalised counterpart to the white, 'built' body, positioned as though embodying a 'primitive' or 'wild' energy in contrast to the achieved muscularity of white icons.

Largely absent in Dyer's discussion of the 'white man's muscles' is the figure of the East Asian male, symptomatic of the extent to which this figure has historically been positioned as the feminised 'other' to white masculinity in US culture.<sup>222</sup> While Jachinson Chen acknowledges the popularity of several East Asian action stars in the USA, including Jackie Chan, Jet Li and Bruce Lee, he suggests that these are anomalies that run counter to the more general feminisation of East Asian masculinity.<sup>223</sup> David Eng similarly tracks the figure of the East Asian male from being the embodiment of 'yellow peril' between 1860 and 1940, the most 'foreign, racialized and unassimilable' migrants, to the 'model minority' post-1965, 'the most invisible, colorless and compliant'.<sup>224</sup> Eng builds upon debates surrounding the feminisation of East Asian American masculinity that emerged out of the 1960s 'Yellow Power' movement to analyse contemporary literary texts that perpetuate this position. Arguing that sexual and racial difference must be considered as entwined mechanisms through which East Asian masculinity has been constructed, he focuses

---

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>222</sup> While this chapter draws on work that utilises the terms 'Asian male' and 'Asian American', I utilise the British term 'East Asian' as a racialising category that geographically refers to countries including China, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, North Korea and South Korea. This term is problematic in suggesting a fictitious coherency; as Lisa Lowe argues, while phrases such as 'Asian male' are used to contest the circulation of racialised categories that construct and assume sameness, their propagation can give legitimacy to this homogeneity: 'Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences', in *A Companion to Asian American Studies*, ed. by Kent A. Ono (Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 254–75. See also David L. Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001). This chapter is as specific with its use of such terms as possible.

<sup>223</sup> Jachinson Chen, *Chinese American Masculinities: From Fu Manchu to Bruce Lee* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>224</sup> Eng, p. 24.

on cultural texts in which ‘the Western male monopolizes the part of the “top”’ while ‘the Asian is invariably assigned the role of the “bottom”’.<sup>225</sup> Through these analyses, Eng observes how East Asian male bodies have been figured as crucial avatars onto which white masculinity’s anxieties regarding the threat of psychic disintegration are displaced.

Viewed through this historical lens, Zhang’s performance does not simply embody a masculine archetype. Instead, his muscle-suit draws upon ‘borrowed symbols’: ones that are historically taken (perhaps even ‘stolen’) from Hollywood cinema and US popular culture.<sup>226</sup> As a result, the skintight suturing of meaty muscle to Zhang’s body becomes ‘a fiction of identification as seamless equivalence’, whereby Zhang literalises the process of stitching oneself into the US cultural fabric.<sup>227</sup> This ‘playing back’ or repetition of a ‘borrowed’ hyper-masculine figure historically racialised as a white, Western archetype evokes the structure of mimicry: the process by which colonial imaginaries are sustained by compelling the other to imitate the colonial self. For Homi Bhabha, mimicry is ‘the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite*’.<sup>228</sup> Described as the manner in which the other is compelled to secure the (fictive) origin status of the self through imitation, whilst enfolding within this repetition a crucial ‘excess [...] slippage [...] difference’ that ensures that one is ‘*almost the same but not white*’, mimicry is suggested in *My New York* by the gargantuan scale of Zhang’s meaty body.<sup>229</sup> Inflated imitation signals mimicry’s necessary failure, rendering hyperbolic the passive submission to the archetype. The double bind of hyper-assimilation is therefore visualised in *My New York*: the paradox whereby

---

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>226</sup> Lin, p. 84.

<sup>227</sup> Eng, p. 23.

<sup>228</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 122.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid, p. 128.



assimilation appears the means through which to secure one's status as a 'proper' masculine subject, yet simultaneously 'confirms' the historically feminised position of East Asian masculinity within US culture.<sup>230</sup>

Zhang's gigantic meat costume presents a scalar difference to other figures in Figure 5, opening up the possibility of internal critique in the ostensibly submissive 'playing back' of this masculine archetype. Attention has recently been paid to the obscured role of Chinese labour in the construction of the railroads that were integral to the development of US infrastructure.<sup>231</sup> Between 1850 and 1940, Chinese males were desired as cheap labour; however, anxieties about their capacity to usurp white workers provoked a 'yellow peril' panic, resulting in the sustained denial of citizenship to Chinese men in the USA.<sup>232</sup> Figure 5 alludes to the continued invisibility of this labour in narratives of US expansion as the migrant workers holding Zhang's figure aloft are consigned to the shadows at the bottom of the image. Viewed retrospectively with an awareness of Zhang's current position as overseer of a studio factory system employing over two hundred workers, this image may be a disquieting reminder of the differential status afforded to a 'superstar' artist and those

---

<sup>230</sup> For more on the tensions surrounding hyper-assimilation, see Eng, pp. 20–22 and 169–70.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., pp. 35–103.

<sup>232</sup> Following the influx of Chinese labourers during the 1850s California Gold Rush, the California state government passed measures that required Chinese workers to obtain special licences. While this was curtailed by the federal government, in 1879 Congress passed laws limiting Chinese immigration. This led to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which suspended the entry of Chinese labourers for ten years. This was the first law in US history to place broad restrictions on immigration. All Chinese people travelling in the country were required to carry certificates attesting to their labour status. Further measures were introduced, including the 1888 Scott Act, which prevented those who visited China from re-entering the US. The Chinese Exclusion Act was renewed twice more: in 1892 and in 1902 when it was extended indefinitely, and expanded to include Hawaii and the Philippines. Despite Chinese boycotts in protest, the Exclusion Act was only repealed in 1943 to improve diplomatic relations with China during World War II. See 'Milestones: 1866–1898: Chinese Immigration and the Chinese Exclusion Acts', *US State Department: Office of the Historian*, (n.d.) <<http://history.state.gov/milestones/1866-1898/chinese-immigration>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

whose labour provides the necessary crux to career-making performances.<sup>233</sup>

Focusing, however, on the composition of Figure 5, the contrast between the centrality of Zhang's performing body and the obscured figures working to maintain this statuesque pose renders explicit the means by which the presumed superiority of this masculine archetype has been achieved through the consignment of its perceived others to the shadowy, spatial 'bottom'.

Although this reference to the migrant workers as being at the 'bottom' describes their spatial positioning in Figure 5, it deliberately evokes Richard Fung's appraisal of East Asian men as the sexual 'bottom' in his analysis of gay male video pornography. For Fung, East Asian men are typically rendered passive as agents of desire, being conflated with the penetrated position of the anus in distinct contrast to white males.<sup>234</sup> On the surface, the link between Fung's analysis of gay male porn and *My New York* seems tenuous. Yet, it is striking that Zhang's suit presents a very particular 'wound' familiar to the logic of psychoanalysis in being without a penis. Eng sees the denial of the penis to the East Asian male as a recurrent form of 'racial castration' in which the trauma of sexual difference is negotiated as racial difference for the white male. Eng outlines this argument through an analysis of David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* (1998), a play that subverts the gendered dynamics of Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly* (1904) by staging the tale of French civil servant René Gallimard, who carries out a twenty-year affair with opera diva Song Lilling before

---

<sup>233</sup> This debate gained attention following Marina Abramović's use of low-paid volunteers to restage her performances for the 2011 Museum Of Contemporary Art Gala. See Catherine Wagley, 'Marina Abramović's MOCA Gala Controversy: Jeffrey Deitch Confronted and the Performers Speak Out', *LA Weekly*, (19 December 2011) <<http://www.laweekly.com/publicspectacle/2011/12/19/marina-abramovics-moca-gala-controversy-jeffrey-deitch-confronted-and-the-performers-speak-out>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>234</sup> Richard Fung, 'Looking for My Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Video Porn', in *Asian American Studies*, ed. by Ono (Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 235–53.

she is later revealed as a male spy. Eng reads Gallimard's apparent surprise at this revelation through a re-appraisal of the psychic mechanism of the fetish.<sup>235</sup>

Since the fetish in Freud's account is the process by which the masculine subject attributes a penis substitute to the female body to make her tolerable as a sexual subject and to disavow the threat of castration that she embodies, for Eng the refusal to see the penis on the Chinese male body in *M. Butterfly* is an example of the 'reverse fetish' which strategically *avows* castration. As he states, 'by denying the penis that is clearly there for him to see, Gallimard psychically castrates the Asian male, placing him in a position of lesser masculinity to secure for himself a position of greater masculinity.'<sup>236</sup> Rather than have the trauma of sexual difference played out on the female body, as conventional accounts of the fetish would dictate, in *M. Butterfly* it is the Chinese male body that is the site through which this psychic mechanism is enacted. This 'reverse fetish' avows castration through the body of the Chinese male, thereby maintaining a sense of racial superiority for the white masculine subject and, in the specific instance of Gallimard, translating his desire for Song into 'appropriate' heterosexuality.

Eng's account of the 'reverse fetish' is particularly productive in asserting 'the complex manner in which Asian, white and black male identity circulate in a psychic economy of racial as well as sexual difference, gaining their discursive legibility in relation to one another'.<sup>237</sup> However, his reading of 'racial castration' in *M. Butterfly* as a 'reverse fetish' is dependent upon Gallimard's refusal of the legibility of the Chinese male penis: his determination 'to not see what is apparently there for us to

---

<sup>235</sup> Eng, pp. 137–66. See also David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1988).

<sup>236</sup> Eng, p. 15. See also Freud, 'Fetishism', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1955 [1927]), 21, pp. 152–57.

<sup>237</sup> Eng, p. 152.

see', whether as a defensive misreading or conscious bad faith.<sup>238</sup> By contrast, *My New York's* performance of spectacular phallic lack is stitched into the contours of Zhang's costume; in other words, the suit's missing genitals are 'given to be seen'. Yet rather than simply return us to a structure of mimicry in which the lack of penis is the 'slippage' that reiterates the logic of '*almost the same but not white*', the use of meat as material for the suit disturbs this schema.

Historically meat was implicated in the division constituted between US labourers and Chinese migrant workers in the late nineteenth century, as evidenced by the publication *Some Reasons for Chinese Exclusion: Meat vs Rice: American Manhood Against Asiatic Coolieism: Which Shall Survive?*, issued by the American Federation of Labour in 1902 to support the renewal of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. This tract, published to protest against the ostensible usurpation of white labour by Chinese workers, quotes Hon. James G. Blaine who publicly distinguishes between US males 'who must have beef-and-bread' and Chinese males who 'can live on rice'.<sup>239</sup> Arthur Stout makes a similar claim in *Chinese Immigration and the Physiological Causes of the Decay of a Nation* (1862) that 'the vigorous strength of Caucasian labour cannot be nourished by a handful of rice'.<sup>240</sup> These publications intimate the fear that Chinese males were *too* efficient: 'nonconsuming, nondesiring machines' as though fleshy embodiments of the automaton that provoked similar anxieties in the same period.<sup>241</sup> As Rosanne Currarino argues, this instigated a re-evaluation of consumption for white working-class males as the capacity to afford

---

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>239</sup> American Federation of Labour, *Some Reasons for Chinese Exclusion: Meat vs Rice: American Manhood Against Asiatic Coolieism: Which Shall Survive?* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1902), p. 24.

<sup>240</sup> Arthur Stout in Colleen Lye, *America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893–1941* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 56.

<sup>241</sup> Rosanne Currarino, "'Meat vs Rice': The Ideal of Manly Labour and Anti-Chinese Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century America', *Men and Masculinities*, 9:4 (2007), 476–90 (p. 487). For more on fears regarding the automaton, see Mark Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992).

one's 'beef-and-bread' became a means of distinguishing oneself from the automaton-like status given to Chinese men.

Since the incorporation of meat became a crucial means by which white masculinity attempted to assert dominance at the turn of the twentieth century, the assumption of a muscle-suit made of meat in *My New York* repeats this mechanism for reinforcing one's virility and strength. Yet, Zhang simultaneously visualises the disavowed anxiety behind the metonymic relation between meat and masculinity as the masculine archetype itself becomes an object of consumption. In his discussion of mimicry, Bhabha argues that it sails close to mockery as 'the success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace'.<sup>242</sup> The use of meat as the material for the prosthetic muscularity of Zhang's costume mimics the historical reinforcement of white masculinity through meat eating: that is, *having* meat as equivalent to having the phallus. However, meat simultaneously is an 'inappropriate object' for mimicry; Zhang's costume not only serves as a reminder of meat eating as a historic strategy provoked by 'anxious virility', but also turns his body into the object of the gaze: the feminised position of *being* meat.<sup>243</sup> *My New York* therefore reveals a contradiction in the use of the fetish as a psychic mechanism through which to displace the trauma of sexual and racial difference onto the East Asian male. Zhang's meat-suit oscillates between performing the avowal of castration — the suit's lack of penis is the crucial 'difference' that reassures white masculinity of its superiority in the process of being imitated — yet simultaneously disavows castration — the meat-suit 'plays back' the Orientalising fetishisation of the feminised East Asian body to hide the threat of castration it concurrently poses. In so

---

<sup>242</sup> Bhabha, p. 123.

<sup>243</sup> Adams, *Sexual Politics*, p. 5.

doing, *My New York* performs resemblance and menace: the ‘inappropriate’ use of meat is a spectacular reminder of what must be disavowed in order to reify the ‘meatiness’ of the hyper-masculine archetype.

### **Inappropriate Objects**

*My New York* has been praised as a compassionate performance of earnest candour, the meatiness of Zhang’s costume presenting a palpable wound that communicates our shared fragility as though an inner truth brought to the outside. While such readings attribute an evocative appeal to the red-raw surface of Zhang’s costume, this interprets the ‘wound’ of meat as a sign of human vulnerability. Positioning meat as generative of a fresh, unmediated immediacy perpetuates a proprietary schema through which meat is seen to nourish the human by providing that which is experientially lacking. To speak of the ‘appeal’ of meat — in both the sense of its desired qualities and its presumed address when read as a wound in live performance — refuses meatiness as an exclusive synonym for muscular fortification, yet equates the animal body with the ‘raw promise’ of affective immediacy and pathos. What this obscures is that the meat-suit not only suggests precarity — the capacity to be wounded — but also embodies the capacity to wound through the presence of already-annihilated animal flesh.

By attending to the tension presented by a fortified *and* mortified meat-suit, one can instead read *My New York* as giving a sense of historicity to meat’s role in the construction of masculine archetypes. Zhang’s reworking of masculinised figures drawn from US popular culture shows how the frictions within the hyper-masculine performance are not ‘an intrinsic and essential contradiction’, but are historically shaped. Viewed through this lens, meat is no longer an ‘appropriate material’ that

transparently registers human trauma, but instead becomes an ‘inappropriate object’: one that resembles and menaces. Zhang’s performance powerfully stages the ambivalent position of meat in securing masculine domination and allows for this ambivalence to be historically located. What is nonetheless striking about the emphasis on fortification and mortification is that this obscures another ‘vulnerability’ surrounding hyper-masculine figuration, one identified as similarly crucial to the fraught relation between masculinity and spectacle. Steve Neale argues that with regards to images of masculinity, ‘the erotic elements involved in the relations between the spectator and the male image have constantly to be repressed’.<sup>244</sup> While *My New York* is typically read as either warrior-like armour or a traumatic wound, the potential erotics of presenting the masculine body as meat remain implicit. The next chapter therefore discusses a pornographic novella, *The Butcher*, that reflects on the sexual connotations of meatiness and its implication in the evocation of desire.

---

<sup>244</sup> Steve Neale, ‘Masculinity as Spectacle’, in *The Sexual Subject*, ed. by Merck, pp. 277–90.

## Chapter Three

### Writing Sex in a 'Forest of Meat': Alina Reyes's *The Butcher*

In her formative discussion of 'body genres', Linda Williams argues that horror, melodrama and pornography have historically been seen as 'low' cultural productions due to their appeal to, and spectacularisation of, bodily sensation.<sup>245</sup> In pornography the tendency to position women as the spectacular embodiment of sexual pleasure, pain and excitement has, somewhat paradoxically, caused critics of the genre to accuse it of objectifying its subjects, reducing (often female) bodies to deadened 'meat' to incite sexual arousal. This conflict resonates with Chapter Two's positing of a general tension in contemporary art whereby 'meatiness' is seen to generate affective, sensual encounters predicated upon the use of a material devoid of sensation. To reflect further on this issue and to consider the implication of meat in depictions of sexual desire, Chapter Three explores Alina Reyes's novella, *The Butcher* (originally published in French as *Le Boucher* in 1988), a formative publication in the rise of contemporary erotic fiction marketed as being 'by women for women'.<sup>246</sup> In this coming-of-age tale, the young female protagonist narrates her seduction by the titular figure through the motif of butchery, rendering hyperbolic the alignment of the pornographic with the body-turned-meat. While the text therefore gestures towards the perceived sexualisation of fragmentation and objectification attributed to pornography as a genre, the theme of butchery is also integral to the novella's exploration of the difficulties of capturing the pleasures of lived flesh through the written word. This chapter considers how butchery and a fluctuating living flesh/dead

---

<sup>245</sup> Linda Williams, 'Film Bodies: Gender, Genre and Excess', *Film Quarterly*, 44:4 (1991), 2–13.

<sup>246</sup> Alina Reyes, *The Butcher*, trans. by David Watson (London: Minerva Press, 1992 [1988]). All quotations are drawn from this English language translation of *Le Boucher* with page numbers included in the main body of the text.



meat dynamic are implicated in the novella's self-reflexive comment on the task of writing sex.<sup>247</sup>

### Incendiary Speech

Published in 1988 to unprecedented commercial success, *The Butcher* secured Reyes's position as a figure central to the emergence of contemporary erotic fiction written 'by women for women'.<sup>248</sup> Her first novella offers a tale of adolescent sexual awakening that plays upon pornography's existing association with 'meat' by positioning the eponymous butcher as the subject of fascination for the young female narrator. An art student working as a cashier in a butcher's shop during a sweltering summer, the unnamed protagonist becomes enraptured by the titular figure, whilst also romantically enamoured with the distant Daniel, her brother's friend. With much of the novella despairingly addressed to this aloof young man, the narrator's unquenched, escalating desires are paralleled with her frustrated attempts to write and paint. Following the narrator's 'bungled lovemaking' with Daniel (67), Part Two of

---

<sup>247</sup> It is important to note that reading this living flesh/dead meat dynamic through the English translation produces a particularly distinct interpretation of *The Butcher* as the French word *la chair* can mean both flesh and meat. Probyn describes *la chair* as suggesting 'the delicious intermingling of species' in referring to animal, human and vegetable flesh, p. 71. This contrasts with the English language, in which, as Angela Carter notes, 'we make a fine distinction between flesh, which is usually alive and, typically, human; and meat, which is dead, inert, animal and intended for consumption': *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (London: Virago, 1979), p. 161.

<sup>248</sup> The novella sold over 500,000 copies in France and entered the top ten bestseller list in the UK following its release: see Phil Abbot, 'Erotic Crusader: Alina Reyes', *Freezerbox*, (31 May 2001) <<http://www.freezerbox.com/archive/article.php?id=127>> and 'The Big Sell', *Independent*, (27 February 1993) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/the-big-sell-behind-closed-dors-deep-in-a-swindon-warehouse-an-independent-journalist-hears-salesmen-offering-sex-crime-culture-and-food-to-mr-big-a-27000word-nonfiction-blockbuster-1475647.html>> [both accessed 26 June 2015]. However, as Kaye Mitchell observes, to stress novelty or identify emergence elides the degree to which such writings are 'the latest developments in a long history of popular, public representations of femininity, romance and female sexuality, that is, mass produced texts which are intended for mass consumption': 'Raunch Versus Prude: Contemporary Sex Blogs and Erotic Memoirs by Women', *Psychology and Sexuality*, 3:1 (2012), 12–25 (p. 12). For an alternative canon of erotic texts by women authors beyond the 'blockbuster' novel, see Alex Hughes and Kate Ince, eds, *French Erotic Fiction: Women's Desiring Writing, 1880–1990* (Oxford and Washington, DC: Berg, 1996), which gives particular attention to women writing on lesbian desire, including Hélène Cixous and Monique Wittig.

the novella narrates her inevitable sexual encounter with the butcher, culminating in scenes that play with gendered dynamics of masculine domination and feminine submission. Where *The Butcher* distinguishes itself from other erotic fiction is in the final third of the novella. Rather than equate sexual climax with narrative closure, in *The Butcher* the narrator leaves the titular figure for a nightclub where she meets four young men. After she has sex with one, Pierre, outside in a wood, the novella ends with the narrator waking up disorientated in a ditch, temporarily ‘paralysed’ and in considerable pain (65). While she struggles to even walk home, her rekindled desire to ‘go home and paint’ (65) gives *The Butcher* an ambivalently ‘triumphant’ tone by its eventual close.<sup>249</sup>

Since pornography has been criticised for rendering the lived body as objectified ‘meat’ for the purpose of sexual arousal, *The Butcher* provocatively gestures towards these concerns through the structuring motif of butchery.<sup>250</sup> Indeed, while literary texts by women writers featuring explicit sex have often been positioned in the genre of erotic fiction, it is the carnal thematic at the heart of Reyes’s novella that has prompted many to distinguish it as a piece of pornography.<sup>251</sup> *The Butcher* opens with a scene of dismemberment, watched by the narrator: ‘The blade plunged gently into the muscle then ran its full length in one supple movement. The action was perfectly controlled. The slice curled limply onto the chopping block’ (3). Insinuating a dynamic of domination as the flesh is severed

---

<sup>249</sup> Victoria Best and Martin Crowley, *The New Pornographies: Explicit Sex in Recent French Film and Fiction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 15.

<sup>250</sup> See, for example, Carter’s analysis of the female characters in the writings of the Marquis de Sade, in which she argues that he does not engage with the sensual pleasures of the flesh, but rather with the ‘butcherly delights’ of voyeurism and sadistic domination, p. 162.

<sup>251</sup> Those who specifically term *The Butcher* as ‘pornographic’ include Lisa Downing, ‘Feminist Fictions of the Flesh (?): Alina Reyes’s *Le Boucher* and Rachilde’s *La Marquise de Sade*’, *Journal of Romance Studies*, 2:1 (2002), 51–64 and Best and Crowley, p. 32. See also ‘The Big Sell’ in which a representative of Reed Publishers states that ‘*The Butcher* masqueraded as literature, and it was in fact pornography’. This raises the question as to the precise definitional line between erotic fiction and pornography, an often fluid and uncertain distinction. For more on this debate, see Abbot’s interview with Reyes; see also Best and Crowley.

in one ‘supple’ motion, ‘limply’ collapsing under the weight of its own inertia, this act of butchery is visually fascinating for the novella’s narrator, prompting a dual sense of identification. While Lisa Downing interprets the narrator’s claim that she ‘could feel that cold, plastic mass beneath the palm of my own hand’ (3) as evidence of her alignment with the butcher, the ambiguity of the phrasing suggests a simultaneous identification with the meat itself: that ‘cold plastic mass’ under the skin of one’s own palm, here brutalised and ‘revived’ by the butcher’s knife (3).<sup>252</sup> This is heightened by her subsequent pleasure at the butcher returning her look with a gaze that ‘penetrated behind my pupils, ran all over my body, thrust into my belly’ (9). The implied invigoration of the meat through the act of domination, as well as the thrill of falling under the butcher’s violently probing gaze, foreshadow the narrator’s eventual sexual encounter with the titular figure, an inevitable plot development further anticipated by the double entendre description of the meat on the chopping board sounding like ‘a kiss against the wood’ (3). From the beginning of the novella, butchery, both as a physical act and as a metaphor for the penetrating gaze of the ‘dirty look’, incites sexual arousal.

The narrator’s explicit titillation at being ‘penetrated’ by a gaze conflated with the butcher’s knife has led to the novella being positioned amongst a number of contemporary pornographic texts that ‘foreground what may be interpreted as the subjective freedom of a woman voluntarily to adopt a masochistic or abject sexual role in the interest of pleasure and experience’.<sup>253</sup> *The Butcher* has therefore been read by Downing as indicative of a shift in feminist discourses towards the pursuit of sexual pleasure and questions of personal choice. The female narrator’s implied identification with meat does, however, evoke a contemporaneous text by Adams. In

---

<sup>252</sup> Downing, p. 56.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

*The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Adams argues that butchery is the site at which the sexual objectification of women's bodies and the brutalisation of animals converge.<sup>254</sup>

For Adams, the techniques of pornography apply as much to the mainstream representation of women as sexual objects as to the relationship between consumers and meat, both offering images structured around a fundamental inequality between viewer and viewed whereby 'one being is alive and whole, the other being is dead and scalded'.<sup>255</sup>

*The Butcher* is not the only example of sexually explicit literature to have explored the link between sex and meat through the objectifying register criticised by Adams. Julie Powell's recent erotic memoir, *Cleaving: A Story of Meat, Marriage and Obsession* (2009), is one of its most notable thematic inheritors, paralleling Powell's apprenticeship in butchery with a simultaneously apologetic and defiant account of her extra-marital affair. Attracted to butchery precisely due to its historical construction as a largely masculine profession following the success of her previous publication *Julie and Julia: My Year of Cooking Dangerously* (2005), Powell revels in the convergence of meat and the sexual objectification of female bodies: for example, calling a crown roast 'sluttish', 'my sexy little she-roast'.<sup>256</sup> While *Cleaving* suggests a 'macho thrill' in adopting the role of the butcher, Reyes's novella speaks to the perception of the pornographic imagination as engaged with the 'butcherly delights' of voyeurism, objectification and domination by having its protagonist actively identify with a piece of dead animal flesh.<sup>257</sup> It is this aspect of *The Butcher* that has been most heavily criticised as participating in 'the masculine tradition of

---

<sup>254</sup> Adams, *Sexual Politics and The Pornography of Meat* (New York and London: Continuum, 2004).

<sup>255</sup> Adams, *Pornography*, p. 18.

<sup>256</sup> Julie Powell, *Cleaving: A Story of Meat, Marriage and Obsession* (London: Penguin, 2009), p. 117. See also Powell, *Julie and Julia: My Year of Cooking Dangerously* (London: Penguin 2005).

<sup>257</sup> Powell, *Cleaving*, p. 194.

erotic writing which cuts off and fetishises female body parts'.<sup>258</sup> Yet, the novella goes further in stressing the narrator's explicit pleasure at being 'butchered' through this process.

Sharing Adams's assumption that the eroticised violence of butchery is primarily linked to the visual, John Phillips argues that *The Butcher* offers, at best, 'a female version of the male gaze'.<sup>259</sup> This reading obscures the degree to which it is the spoken word that is the significant relay of desire within the novella. Although *The Butcher* opens with an eroticised exchange of penetrating gazes over a piece of sliced flesh, the butcher is described by the narrator as 'the one who talked to me about sex all day long' (4). If the daily recurrence of this 'dirty talk' suggests tedium, these verbal seductions have an incendiary effect on the narrator as she describes how his words 'light the fire between my legs' (5). The positioning of language as the primary channel of arousal between the butcher and the narrator speaks to the function of pornographic literature as a genre: its investment in the capacity to generate sexual arousal through writing. Given the theme of Reyes's novella, it is the butcher's trade that is particularly implicated in his capacity to 'talk dirty' as his words cut like his knife:

I'll eat your arse and your breasts your shoulders your arms your navel  
and the small of your back your thighs your legs your knees your toes I'll  
sit you on my nose I'll smother myself in your mound your head on my  
balls my huge cock in your cute little mouth [...] (12)

This stream of sexual come-ons is not only permeated by the butcher's sense of his own dominance, later telling her 'I'll be the lord and master' (16), but also suggests that his 'dirty talk' wields the same effect as his gaze and his knife, slicing the

---

<sup>258</sup> Downing, p. 57.

<sup>259</sup> John Phillips, *Forbidden Fictions: Pornography and Censorship in Twentieth-Century French Literature* (London and Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 1999), p. 6.

narrator into a largely anonymous list of body parts, set against his ‘balls’ and obligatory ‘huge cock’.

The explicitness of his speech plays off conventional understandings of the butcher as a figure emblematic of a predatory masculinity.<sup>260</sup> Such characterisation is indicative of a broader historical tendency to attribute a lustful ‘proletarian animality’ to men in traditionally working-class professions.<sup>261</sup> This stereotype is mobilised in Powell’s memoir, in which she often describes her co-workers through animalising terms: for example, when referring to a fellow butcher, Josh, as ‘a bear of a guy [...] he’s like an animal in a well-designed, spacious zoo’.<sup>262</sup> Powell also demonstrates a more general nostalgia for the ‘old-world butcher of our imaginations, with massive biceps and hooks and knives they wield like extensions of their fingers’.<sup>263</sup> Discussing his short film *Carné* (1991), Gaspar Noé offers a similar perspective on the butcher figure, observing that he ‘handles meat all day long and so his organic

---

<sup>260</sup> Keith Reader argues that this is particularly true of French cultural texts in which the butcher figure is either ‘disturbed’ or ‘troublingly direct’: *The Abject Object: Avatars of the Phallus in Contemporary French Theory, Literature and Film* (New York and Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), p. 197. Notable examples of the former are Claude Chabrol’s thriller *Le Boucher* (1970), which builds suspense as a female schoolteacher in a small town battles with her suspicions that the amiable butcher, Popaul, is the murderer of a number of young women. Similarly, Gaspar Noé’s short film *Carné* (1991) and its sequel, *Seul Contre Tous* (1998), follow a horse butcher tormented by feelings of incestuous lust for his teenage daughter. He is eventually driven to murder after mistakenly assuming that she has been raped following her first menstruation. The association between butchery and villainy extends beyond French culture to such films as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Hooper, 1974) and the period drama *Gangs of New York* (Scorsese, 2002). The milieu of the slaughterhouse also provides a violent setting for some of Patrick McCabe’s novel, *The Butcher Boy* (London: Picador, 1992), subsequently directed by Neil Jordan in the 1997 film adaptation. A female butcher can be found in Philip Roth’s novel *Indignation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2008) in the form of the narrator’s mother; however, she is implicitly masculinised and animalised. As the narrator states, ‘it takes muscle to be a butcher and my mother had muscles’; he also describes her as a ‘bear’, p. 157.

<sup>261</sup> See Brian Maidment’s discussion of the figure of the dustman in *Dusty Bob: A Cultural History of Dustmen, 1780–1870* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 137. It should be noted that butchery in France was historically a well-regarded profession controlled by powerful guilds. This status was defended in the nineteenth century amidst changes to the French meat industry. As this period saw the imposition of industrial slaughterhouses across France, butchers sought to retain their artisanal position, such as through opposing the rapid industrialisation of meat production occurring in the USA that was accelerating the devaluation of slaughter and butchery: for more on this shift, see Claflin.

<sup>262</sup> Powell, *Cleaving*, p. 25.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

link is stronger than most'.<sup>264</sup> For Noé, it is the butcher's tactile intimacy with meat that gives him a 'bestial and basic' sexuality, one at the limits of the respectable.<sup>265</sup> In *The Butcher*, this primal knowledge is particularly evidenced by the use of 'butcherese': an allusion to *louchébem*, the slang used by Parisian butchers since the early 1900s.<sup>266</sup> While Noé implies that it is the butcher's physical proximity to meat that produces his base sexuality, for the narrator it is the titular figure's 'secret language' that most powerfully demonstrates his carnal knowledge.

Cryptic and clandestine, 'butcherese' carries connotations of oppositionality, with the narrator actively mocking customers who fail to realise that 'the boss, your butcher, spoke a double language in public, standard speech and butcherese' (29). This polarity between 'public, standard' speech and the argot used by the butchers leads Warren Motte to describe butcherese as 'the fallen, inverted parody of ordinary language', which can be paralleled with pornographic literature as a genre.<sup>267</sup> After all, if butchery is integral to the everyday eating practices of many but remains typically enacted outside of public view, so too is pornographic literature often seen as taboo for describing sexual fantasies and acts that have socially and legally been believed to 'respectably' reside in the private realm. There is consequently a transgressive import to the argot of the butcher precisely for breaching the boundaries of respectability, yet the cryptic alterations ensure that it is half-unheard in the same

---

<sup>264</sup> Noé in Phil Powrie, 'The W/whole and the Abject', in *The Trouble with Men: Masculinities in European and Hollywood Cinema*, ed. by Powrie, Ann Davies and Bruce Babington (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), pp. 207–17 (p. 214).

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> *Louchébem* is a 'cryptic language' that uses 'existing words purposely altered so that people outside a group have difficulties deciphering them': Zsuzsanna Faygal, Douglas Kibee and Frederic Jenkins, *French: A Linguistic Introduction* (Boston, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 173. It is also referenced in *Cleaving*, described as a way to 'talk smack about the customers', p. 73. Powell reveres the masculine environment of the butcher's shop, reserving particular admiration for its bawdy jokes and coarse language. She later states that her experiences allow her to 'share a language' with the butchers, p. 225.

<sup>267</sup> Warren F. Motte, *Playtexts: Ludics in Contemporary Literature* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), p. 176.

breath: an aural equivalent of visible concealment. However, Motte stresses that it is the butcher's come-ons rather than butcherese that are the focal site of his power; as the 'vital material substance of his desire', 'the butcher's language is that of the novel as a whole'.<sup>268</sup> The description of the titular figure's words as 'forbidden poems' not only stresses their oppositional quality, but also asserts the literary value of these sexually explicit utterances and therefore, in turn, of *The Butcher*. Alternating descriptions of the butcher's whispers as both 'vulgar' (6) and akin to 'poems' (28) imply a contradictory investment in his words. The transgression attributed to them exploits the positioning of working-class masculinity as indicative of a coarse, basic sexuality, whilst also sublimating the butcher's speech into something deserving of 'high' cultural status: poetic, literary and lyrical.

The ambiguous valuation of the butcher's words is further illuminated by the reverence that is shown to what might be considered an 'in-between' or 'liminal' materiality: the breath. While Motte and Downing focus on the 'hypnotic, erotic effect' of the butcher's speech, it is his breath that is integral to his allure.<sup>269</sup> Kevin Ferguson argues that the respiratory system has long been a vital participant in depictions of erotic life, citing soundtracks to porn films and the signalling of post-coital satisfaction through a prolonged drag on a cigarette.<sup>270</sup> In *The Butcher*, the allure of the breath is sexual and anticipatory, the narrator describing them both being 'transfixed by a breath become speech which emerged on its own, had its own life, a disembodied animal, just between my mouth and my ear' (12). This description suggests that breath is a conduit of speech but is prior to, and exceeds, this purpose, promising a kind of pre-linguistic palpability. There is also something strikingly

---

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>269</sup> Downing, p. 62; see also Motte.

<sup>270</sup> Kevin L. Ferguson, 'Panting in the Dark: The Ambivalence of Air in Cinema', *Camera Obscura*, 26:2 (2011), 33–63.



oxymoronic in the reference to his breath as like a ‘disembodied animal’; if animality has typically been rooted to the earthly realm, ‘disembodied’ speaks to the immaterial, even spiritual connotations of air. This resonates with the contradictory status of the butcher, speaking to his figural association with a ‘bestial and basic’ sexuality, whilst also evoking the transcendental: animal *and* ethereal, profane *and* sacred. The positioning of breath as an index of the corporeal — something prior to the linguistic, the vessel through which speech emanates —underscores the phantasy that the butcher embodies as the narrator’s object of desire: the experience of immediate, palpable, bodily sensation. It is the butcher’s breath that most embodies pornographic literature’s promise of conveying and provoking the pleasurable shudders of the lived body: a capacity that is initially shown in *The Butcher* to be inextricably tied to an intimacy with meat.

### **Exhausting Flesh**

The entrancing tactility of the butcher’s breath, carrying forth his ‘forbidden poems’, contrasts dramatically with the narrator’s inability to give voice to her own desires. As an ironic counterpoint to her position as narrator, she struggles to communicate her feelings for Daniel, a friend of her brother. Despite the strength of her ardour, she cannot transform her longings into words. She often ‘starts to write’ to him, yet her attempts feel inconsequential, weightless; as she despairs, ‘if only my words had the force of this love which makes a hole in my stomach and causes me pain’ (13). Even the ‘old poems’ of others are ‘too soft’, contrasting with the palpable strength of the butcher’s words that ‘broke against my neck, trickle down my back, over my breasts, my stomach, my thighs’ (20). Her frustrations gesture here towards the debated distinction between the ‘soft-core’ romantic landscape often attributed to erotic

fiction and the 'hard-core' world of pornography. While erotic fiction has been given a literary value to contrast it with the 'sub-aesthetic literality' and commercial instrumentality of the pornographic, it has also been criticised for 'prettifying' sex, sublimating it into something aesthetically pleasing.<sup>271</sup>

This polarisation evokes Rosalind Galt's argument regarding the marginalisation of the pretty as a minoritised aesthetic. Although her focus is the cinematic image, she describes how the pretty is typically seen as 'merely' a pleasing surface that wields neither depth nor radical excess.<sup>272</sup> Throughout the novella, the narrator disparages that which seems to touch on prettiness as though superficial: for example, when she expresses anger at how her brother and Daniel patronisingly 'called me pretty when I tied my hair in a ponytail before working' (22). The superficial values of the pretty are opposed to the work of the butcher, which demands a literal and figurative penetration of surface to obtain intimacy with the body's depths, whether through the chopping of meat or the palpable force of words that 'break against' the narrator's flesh. While earlier the novella implicitly praises the butcher's whisperings as 'forbidden poems' (28), *The Butcher* aligns itself with the pornographic as the narrator's ineffectually 'soft', inadvertently 'prettified' sentiments appear wanting compared with the coarse, penetrating explicitness of the butcher's speech.

Although this positions speech as a site of masculine mastery within the novella, there are telling moments in which the butcher's revered capacity to express himself bluntly through breathy words breaks down. The narrator describes a repeatedly curtailed conversation in which the butcher:

---

<sup>271</sup> See Best and Crowley, p. 3.

<sup>272</sup> Rosalind Galt, *Pretty: Film and the Decorative Image* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 6.

began talking to me about his apprenticeship in the abattoirs. It was hard, very hard, it was a time he almost went mad, he told me. But he didn't take up the story, he quickly clammed up, his face clouded over (20).

While the slaughterhouse would seem the ideal environment for the butcher, his inability to 'take up the story' challenges Keith Reader's description of the titular figure as 'troublingly direct'.<sup>273</sup> For the butcher, the place where living flesh is violently transformed into meat remains beyond expression. This is not the only space of silence within the novella. Earlier in the text, the narrator discusses an elderly male customer who regularly purchases goat testicles from the shop, observing that 'the boss and butcher — who treated most things as an excuse for vulgar asides' never said a word about this transaction and she, in turn, is silenced by their discretion, admitting that she 'had never dared ask' about the purchase (7). The significance of the testicles as a ritualistic form of totemic consumption undertaken in the pursuit of male virility is evident to her; yet, as she acknowledges, 'that part of the male anatomy, so often vaunted in all kinds of jokes and comments, nevertheless demanded respect. It went without saying that one could only go so far before trampling on sacred ground' (6–7). Within *The Butcher* itself, one finds 'all kinds of jokes and comments' on male anatomy: bawdy riffs on the physical resemblance between sausages and penises, for example (38). However, the almost comic graveness of the hushed reverence surrounding the purchased testicles suggests taboo in the merger of the sacred and the profane. When understood in dialogue with the butcher's inability to discuss the abattoir, these spaces of silence imply that the male characters share a deep-rooted ambivalence when it comes to the potential slippage between the penis and a piece of meat.

---

<sup>273</sup> Reader, p. 197.

The novella positions the alignment of male genitals with meat as profane, a source of bawdy jokes, and sacred, necessarily channelled into totemic ritual and implicated in the reverence of silence. While the narrator appears to merely observe this paradox, the ambivalence of the men opens up a parallel between the otherwise celebrated skills of the butcher's trade and the narrator's own thwarted attempts to paint and sculpt. An art student, the narrator describes her recurrent disappointment at her creations: 'after baking, my objects, hewn with a jeweller's precision, were no more than broken trinkets, crumbling at the first touch of my fingertips' (17). Her growing frustrations lead her to eventually exclaim: 'are we not stupid to want to capture the world with our pens and our brushes at the ends of our right hands?' (31–2). This reference to painting and writing as being undertaken with 'our right hands' is telling in that it contrasts with her earlier alignment of living flesh with the 'left side of our souls' (4). Implicitly evoking the enduring association between the left side of the brain and creativity, the narrator implies attempts at capturing the world with one's 'right side' can only 'circle around' the lived experience of flesh (31): a comment that Motte interprets as a gloss on the task of writing sex itself.<sup>274</sup> Yet, while her failure to transform her 'precision' into satisfying artworks ostensibly contrasts with the butcher's carnal skills, his calm dexterity also leaves only fragments: meat. This suggests a distinct parallel between the act of transforming living flesh into meat and artistic creation. Although the novella implies that both processes generate a desirable intimacy with the physical world, their products seem frequently inadequate: vulnerable, fragmented, even annihilated. Since pornographic literature is seen to play off 'the fantasy that it might be possible to pierce representation', Victoria Best and Martin Crowley's description aptly evokes the

---

<sup>274</sup> Motte, p. 178.

violence implicit in that ‘fantasy’: namely, that in ‘piercing’ representation, one might destroy the vital allure of that which one seeks to encounter.<sup>275</sup>

While meat appears the intermittently threatening underbelly to the desire to ‘pierce’ representation through a direct experience of the sensual pleasures of the body, *The Butcher* concurrently implies that it is also a means through which to control one’s anxiety in the face of ‘all this flesh’ (15). In his discussion of the relationship between masculinity and abjection in Noé’s aforementioned *Carné*, Phil Powrie argues that cutting — a key component of butchery — indicates a ‘hysterical attempt to [...] control space — most particularly the invasion of the fragmenting and heterodimensional object into the monolithic and uni-dimensional *corps propre*’.<sup>276</sup> Powrie’s comment is grounded in the assumption that the idealised, implicitly masculine body is one defined by integrity and containment, sought through the defensive disavowal of any reminders of feminised fluidity and mutability. Within *The Butcher*, the titular figure’s tendency to fragment the narrator’s body into anonymous parts, as well as his silence over the abattoir, suggest attempts to displace threats to his imagined unity. Yet it is the narrator who most explicitly expresses both exasperation and revulsion at the ‘net of flesh’ that traps us ‘like flies in a spider’s web’ (27). Her aversion to the grotesque mutability of the flesh is evidenced by her dismay at her own body, which she channels into a periodic refusal to eat, as well as her descriptions of the butcher as ‘ugly’, bulging and ‘fat’ (30). The narrator may mock the butcher’s customers who want to ‘maintain their bodies like machines’ (28), but she too fluctuates between a relentless desire for sensual intimacy and a mixture of fatigue and disgust at the overwhelming dynamism of embodied life.

---

<sup>275</sup> Best and Crowley, p. 15.

<sup>276</sup> Powrie, p. 214.

The recurrent references to blood, such as through the repeated symbol of the rose that the narrator seeks to capture artistically, suggest a particular discomfort towards the feminine within the novella. For Patricia Moran, blood may be a familiar literary motif for feminine creativity, yet the conflation of artistic creation with the menstrual often prompts ‘the desire for bounded, autonomous productions that remain distinct from the female body’.<sup>277</sup> Moran’s description speaks to the connotations of containment implied by the narrator’s artwork, the miniature paintings through which she aims to ‘compress the world, seize it and hold it whole in the smallest possible space’ (16). The implication that intimacy with meat is both alluring and a product of the violent need to disavow the mutability of the feminine is at the heart of the increasingly uncertain distinction between living flesh and dead meat throughout the novella: a comment on the inability to secure the precise divisions sought by the butcher’s knife. At the beginning of the novella, the milieu of the butcher’s shop, a veritable ‘forest of meat’ (20), stimulates the narrator’s desires. The ‘supple’ and ‘gentle’ movements of the knife are given a sensual allure, which provokes the narrator’s identification with the meat that can be brutalised and revived through such ‘pleasurable slicing’.<sup>278</sup> The butcher’s intimate and dexterous handling of the meat is furthermore given seductive power as an ‘organic link’ with the flesh that is equated with sexual prowess. In the first section of the novella, there appears little distinction between living flesh and dead meat; both are implicated in the sensual stirrings of the lived body. However, the butcher’s silence over the abattoir and the narrator’s frustrations at her artworks that leave little more than ‘a trace of red powder’ (17) — as though blood — on her hands, suggest that meat cannot be fully disassociated from violence, whether as an unintended product of the desire for sensual immediacy or as

---

<sup>277</sup> Patricia Moran, *Word of Mouth: Body Language in Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1996), p. 114.

<sup>278</sup> Downing, p. 57.

a defence against the threat of the feminine. Meat is therefore collapsed into living flesh — sensual, abundant, plentiful — yet also severed from it, aligned with destruction, annihilation and silence.

### **‘Pure Atom-Sex’**

While there is profound ambivalence regarding the status of meat within the novella, this is superseded in Part Two of *The Butcher* through the inevitable structural ‘pulsion’ towards an explicit sexual encounter with the titular figure, given further narrative momentum following ‘bungled’ (orgasm-free) sex with Daniel.<sup>279</sup> If the central thematic of butchery already indicates the novella’s immersion in cliché, the implication that it is adult rather than adolescent masculinity that will ‘properly’ satisfy the young female narrator is a familiar reiteration of the equation of female sexual pleasure with orgasmic penetration.<sup>280</sup> Having anticipated his (violent) sexual dominance in her fearful observation before meeting him that the butcher will ‘cleave and cleave again cleave and cleave again’ (35), the narrator finds that the butcher initially controls the dynamics of their encounter, such as when aggressively penetrating her anus. Describing how in this moment he ‘hammered me to the depth’, the narrator refers to the merger of ‘pain and pleasure’ this produces (53). A less ambiguously ecstatic dissolution is also intimated, such as when he licks her vagina and she comes, producing a diffused sensual topology: ‘my sex became a channelled surface from which pleasure streamed, the world disappeared, I was no more than this raw flesh’ (49). Although such scenes repeat a familiar heterosexual dynamic of

---

<sup>279</sup> Best and Crowley use this term for the structural momentum that propels pornographic literature, whereby desire is figured as ‘an indestructible drive force that is beyond all meaning and all ethical endeavour’, p. 27.

<sup>280</sup> Downing, p. 60. For more on the beliefs, discourses and investments that have structured twentieth-century understandings of the orgasm, see Annamarie Jagose, *Orgasmology* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2012).

masculine domination and feminine submission given an additional frisson through the palpable threat implied by the butcher's brute sexuality, *The Butcher* presents sex largely as disarmingly pleasurable dissolution from self-possession to self-negation.

As the narrator's transformation into 'raw flesh' suggests that she achieves and embodies the promise of the pornographic as the experience of immediate, 'pure' sensation, this is further signalled by references to language breaking down. In contrast to the continual 'dirty talk' of the butcher's shop, here she states that 'neither of us said a word' (43), uttering only 'sounds alien to the human voice' (52). Just as earlier the breath is described as a 'disembodied animal', hypnotically erotic as a vessel of pre-linguistic corporeal palpability, the narrator's inability to articulate words suggests that she too has become more akin to breath than speech, a surface of sensation beyond the call of the human voice. While this evokes the conventional association of sensual climax with oceanic feelings of dispersal, in keeping with the traditions of pornographic writing, this self-shattering is never quite as total as it appears. Pornographic literature promises to 'turn flesh into word', yet it remains 'a cunningly articulated verbal simulacrum which has the power to arouse but not, in itself, to assuage desire.'<sup>281</sup> The narrator positions herself beyond language, such as when she refers to the weather outside by stating that 'if I knew the language of rain, of course I would write it down, but everyone recognizes it, and is able to recall it to their memory' (52). Although this suggests that the engulfing pleasures of 'pure atom-sex' (55) render redundant the 'recall' of senses that can be directly experienced in the flesh, there is an ironic contrast between this line and the narrator's tendency to describe her encounter through reference to modes of representation. When the narrator notes that 'the world was no more than a vibrant abstract painting, a clash of

---

<sup>281</sup> Carter, p. 15.



marks the colour of flesh' (51), 'raw flesh' (49) is depicted as akin to 'abstraction', but a representation nonetheless. Downing argues that sex with the butcher marks the moment when the novel becomes 'absolutely flesh', 'the incontrovertible real-izing of a desire'.<sup>282</sup> This obscures the extent to which the supposedly 'raw', all-consuming, self-shattering pains and pleasures of sexual arousal and climax cannot quite breach the necessity of mediation through the written word.

Although the narrator's descriptions suggest that the capacity of sex to render the self 'raw flesh' remains a phantasy of absolute subjective unravelling (49), they still confirm her prior suspicion that to have sex with the butcher is to undergo the becoming-anonymous of the living body: that is, to be transformed into meat as he 'cleaves and cleaves again'. Butchery has been understood as a frightening and threatening return to sameness and homogeneity, the brutal transformation of the body into de-individualised flesh.<sup>283</sup> By contrast, *The Butcher* suggests this as a pleasurable, even invigorating metamorphosis, as foreshadowed at the beginning of the novella when the slicing of the muscle both brutalises and revives the meat. If the 'meatiness' of pornography as a genre has been seen to lie in its tendency to objectify bodies, the novella challenges this assumption as the 'meaty' body is one that has fragmented into something approaching 'pure' sensation. The aggressiveness of this act speaks to what Georges Bataille terms the inevitable 'violence in the abrupt wrench out of discontinuity', the loss of individuality and identity in the experience of 'a physicality which can no longer be located in one body'.<sup>284</sup> However, just as Bataille understands these pleasures as occurring inherently in a heterosexual coupling in which the man is 'generally' the 'sacrificer' and the woman the

---

<sup>282</sup> Downing, p. 62.

<sup>283</sup> Amelia Defalco, 'Haunting Physicality: Corpses, Cannibalism and Carnality in Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 75:2 (2006), 771–83.

<sup>284</sup> Georges Bataille, *Eroticism*, trans. by Mary Dalwood (London and New York: Penguin, 2001 [1957]), pp. 16 and xiii.

‘sacrifice’, so too is the becoming-meat of the erotic body in *The Butcher* caught up in a similar dynamic.<sup>285</sup> While the meatiness of the erotic body is aligned with the painful pleasure of temporarily dissolving one’s subjectivity and individuality, it is the feminine body that remains the site of this unravelling as it is ‘butchered’ by the central embodiment of masculinity within the novella.

However, *The Butcher* does proceed to play with the dynamic between the narrator and the titular figure as their sexual encounter continues. Although the narrator expresses an awed reverence for the butcher’s capabilities, such as when describing penetration as the ‘dazzling entry of the saviour’ (50), this is accompanied by other knowing nods to the idealising conventions of the genre. The butcher, earlier described as ‘ugly’ and ‘fat’, is transfigured into a ‘firm and muscular’ figure (44), a ‘body of plenitude’ (47), possessing an ‘incredibly large and erect’ penis (45). Confirming his physical dominance and sexual virility, this characterisation demonstrates the mobilisation of cliché within pornographic literature, which so often depends upon the power of the penis-turned-phallus. If there is a tenor of parody to the butcher’s transformation, this is made explicit when the dynamics of the sexual encounter eventually shift. In a moment that underscores the interchangeability of the gaze, the narrator ties the butcher to a chair. Describing his ‘exposed’ penis as a ‘fragile pivot’ (54):

I placed it in the hollow of both my eyes, on my forehead, on my cheeks, against my nose, on my mouth, my chin, my throat, put my neck on it, squeezed it between my shoulder blades and my bent head, in my armpit, then the other, brushed against it with my breasts till I almost reached a climax, rubbed it with my stomach, my back, my buttocks, my thighs,

---

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

squeezed it between my arms and my folded legs, pressed the sole of my foot against it, until I had left a trace of it over the whole of my body (58–9).

The exhaustive listing of anatomised body parts reverses the butcher's own speech back on him, so that she willingly renders herself meat under her own gaze and touch.

Since this 'blessing' of her body with the penis implies that the narrator is stealing his power, Downing suggests that the narrator invests in the sacredness of the penis at the same moment as confirming its 'fall'. For this reason, she argues, *The Butcher* 'retains — to some extent — the romantic myth of the transcendental penis-made-phallus at the heart of its symbolic discourse.'<sup>286</sup> Yet Downing's qualification 'to some extent' alludes to the way that the almost excessive listing by the narrator *exhausts* the power of the penis-made-phallus, itself rendered just another cut of the body. Through such reversal, Phillips argues that the novella 'celebrates the erotic body, whether male or female, as fragmented and objectified, like pieces of butcher's meat'.<sup>287</sup> While the novella begins by provocatively utilising the metaphor of butchery to speak to the narrator's pleasure at her own objectification, it ultimately loosens this from a gendered position. By its close, the 'meatiness' of sexual pleasure and arousal is no longer inherently feminised, and the butcher, the central embodiment of masculinity, is not the only figure who wields the invigorating and annihilating powers of butchery.

### **'On-All-Fours'**

If the phallic plenitude of the male subject is mocked or 'stolen' at the end of the narrator's encounter with the butcher, it is also undermined by the structure of the

---

<sup>286</sup> Downing, p. 60.

<sup>287</sup> Phillips, p. 192, n. 32.

novella. Rather than have (mutual) orgasm serve as the literal and structural climax of *The Butcher*, it instead jumps forward in time to the narrator entering a club with four young men. The narrator proceeds to have sex with one of the group, Pierre, outside, before waking up alone, disorientated and temporarily ‘paralysed’ in a ditch (65). She nonetheless declares that ‘I was more solid than ever. I had the strength of the butcher and the cunning of the boy with the death’s head [...] I was going to paint’ (70). This has been interpreted as a tonally ‘triumphant’ end to the novella due to the narrator’s evident satisfaction with her experiences, yet for Downing it also signals the extent to which sex within *The Butcher* is neither ‘whole-heartedly positive’ nor fully divorced from pain and abjection.<sup>288</sup>

While there is something disturbing in the narrator’s state at the end of the novella — it is not quite clear, after all, how exactly she has ended up in the ditch — both of these readings obscure the narrator’s implicit animality upon awakening. Regaining consciousness, she deems herself ‘full of earth’ (65); in such pain that she cannot walk, she finds herself ‘crawling’ painstakingly along the ground, ‘laughing without a voice’ (67). Eventually making her way ‘on-all-fours’ (68), this position sparks a flurry of bestial identifications: ‘I imagined I was a dog, a cat, an elephant, a whale’ (69). The grandiose expansiveness of these animal affiliations contrasts dramatically with her laboured movements, her ‘miniscule steps, miniature steps which I could have included in my paintings’ (67). At the end of the novella the narrator therefore appears *less* than human, crawling, staggering, dragging herself along the ground, and *more* than human, capable of even becoming ‘grass, roadside’ (68) through her ‘chameleon’ capacities following her final sexual encounter.

---

<sup>288</sup> See Best and Crowley, p. 15 and Downing, p. 62.

While the narrator's torturous progression towards walking on two legs suggest a painful return to human form from her implied position as 'meat' during her encounter with the butcher, the bestial identifications that emerge during this process evoke Marie Darrieussecq's *Pig Tales* (1996, originally published as *Truismes*).<sup>289</sup> The central conceit of this successful yet controversial French novel resonates with Reyes's novella as Darrieussecq's young female narrator (also unnamed) transforms into a hybrid woman/sow creature. Driven by a characteristic naiveté from the beginning of the novel when she gains employment in a perfumery-cum-massage parlour after submitting to the owner's demand for fellatio, the narrator gradually and unwittingly metamorphoses towards the porcine, as indicated by her difficulty walking erect, the swelling of her bottom and cheeks, the short hairs that grow over her body and her increasingly ruddy complexion. Although these changes initially excite her lovers and clients, as her metamorphosis becomes too notable to conceal, the narrator's utility as an exploitable sexual object implicates her in increasingly violent situations that threaten sexual assault and even death. While *Pig Tales* is not an example of erotic fiction in terms of its function, its comment on the sexual conflation of animality and femininity gestures towards 'the pornographic principle of the extinction of personality and psychology in favour of an exploration of the mechanistic interrogation of power and sex'.<sup>290</sup> Since *The Butcher* aligns the 'meatiness' of the body during sex with the phantasy of pleasurable dissolution into 'raw flesh' (49), this contrasts sharply with *Pig Tales* in which the human/porcine narrator is often haunted by nightmares of butchery that render meatiness a palpable threat largely divorced from connotations of sexual ecstasy.

---

<sup>289</sup> Marie Darrieussecq, *Pig Tales: A Novel of Lust and Transformation*, trans. by Linda Coverdale (London: Faber and Faber, 1996).

<sup>290</sup> Pick, p. 88.

Where *Pig Tales* particularly resonates with *The Butcher* is in the intermittent joy suggested by their narrators' mutual 'descents' into animality. The protagonist in the former revels in washing in puddles and snuffling chestnuts, while Reyes's narrator embraces 'the chance to sleep alone in a ditch in the black night', 'grazing' on insects and grass (69). More significantly, both novels explore the relationship between burgeoning animality and creativity. While Darrieussecq's novel has often been interpreted as a satirical comment on the social inequality and degradation of femininity through her sustained pun on the animalisation of women as sexual objects, Pick argues that the potency of her transformation lies rather in depicting a 'crisis of the human form'.<sup>291</sup> One key site through which this 'crisis' plays out is through the narrator's tortured relation to the written word. From the very first page of *Pig Tales*, the narrator makes clear the physical challenge of writing her 'piggy squiggles' given her changed hands, the porcine here threatening her capacity to utilise language as one of the prime qualities that has defined the human/animal border.<sup>292</sup> By contrast, in *The Butcher* it is the *return* to humanity from an animal, even meat-like state that is the painful site of transformation. While the hybrid status of the narrator of *Pig Tales* jeopardises her relationship with both the written and spoken word, in *The Butcher* the narrator's 'chameleon' affiliations are ultimately implicated in her stimulated desire to 'go home and paint' (65), suggesting her creative invigoration.

*The Butcher*'s alignment of the animal with sensually plentiful, horizontal being and the human with staid, vertical existence brings to mind the polarity rather infamously outlined in a footnote in Freud's *Civilisation and its Discontents*. Freud narrates the emergence of the 'civilised' human, which depends on the 'organic

---

<sup>291</sup> Ibid, p. 83. See also Naama Harel, 'Challenging the Species Barrier in Metamorphosis Literature: The Case of Marie Darrieussecq's *Pig Tales*', *Comparative Critical Studies*, 2:3 (2005), 397–409.

<sup>292</sup> Darrieussecq, p. 1.

repression' of the animal. This is evidenced through the 'loss of sensory capacity', in particular the 'diminution of olfactory stimuli', concurrent with the emergence of a sense of shame at the exposed genitals revealed in the ascent to the vertical position.<sup>293</sup> Nicholas Ray offers a close reading of this text to draw out the ambivalence that floods *Civilisation and its Discontents*, a text that continually posits and undermines a human/animal divide.<sup>294</sup> However, the narrator's submersion in oceanic feelings of unbridled animal affiliations following her pleasurable sexual encounters suggests a process of disrobing herself of the inhibitions that Freud associates with the emergence of the 'civilised' human. The ending of the novella therefore draws out Freud's ambivalence at this 'organic repression' through the narrator's ecstatic immersion in the wildness of animal being, implicitly opposed to the stifling propriety of the human.

However, as the frisson of the central metaphor of meat becomes largely sidelined in the final third of *The Butcher*, the narrator's swarm of bestial imaginings push past their more obvious Freudian associations. Instead, the sparking of the narrator's creative fires through sex recalls Braidotti's proclamation that 'becoming-animal is a brush with the bottom line, with the outsider-within. There is no creativity without it'.<sup>295</sup> Rather than the ambivalence of Freud's account, which couples the animal with greater sensory capacity but also potential degradation, for Braidotti animality is integral to the galvanising of one's imaginative potential. Braidotti's particular linkage of animality and creativity emerges out of her aforementioned reinterpretation of *zoē*, or 'bare life', as notably explored by Giorgio Agamben. For Agamben, *zoē* indicates 'the body as disposable matter in the hands of the despotic

---

<sup>293</sup> Freud, *Civilisation*, p. 46, n. 1.

<sup>294</sup> See Ray, 'Interrogating the Human'.

<sup>295</sup> Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), p. 136.

force of power', life stripped to 'its perishability, its propensity and vulnerability to death and extinction'.<sup>296</sup> This stands in opposition to *bios* — the life of the 'properly' human, political subject. According to this definition, the paradigmatic 'other' of the living human subject, the exemplar of *zoē*, has been the corpse.

Braidotti, however, contests Agamben's structural expulsion of *zoē* from the human as the necessary 'other' of the living body. Instead, she defines it as the 'being-aliveness of the subject', 'a non-human yet affirmative life-force'.<sup>297</sup> Diverging from Agamben's focus on vulnerability and mortality, she asks:

Are we not baffled by this scandal, this wonder, this *zoē*, that is to say, by an idea of life that exuberantly exceeds *bios* and supremely ignores *logos*? Are we not in awe of this piece of flesh called our 'body', of this aching meat called our 'self', expressing the abject and divine potency of life?<sup>298</sup>

This description challenges the separation of meat from sensuous flesh; here, it is the flesh that is in 'pieces' and the meat that is 'aching' as both are caught up in the dynamic intensities of *zoē*. Braidotti therefore collapses ostensible opposites — the abject and the divine, scandal and wonder, flesh and meat — in a manner strikingly reminiscent of their fluctuating connotations throughout *The Butcher*. While for Braidotti, *zoē* is a ceaseless, impersonal life-force, the suggestion that it renders the meat 'aching' gives it a sensual tenor, rendering it an apt term for the 'pulsion' that drives the narrator of *The Butcher* towards the 'abject and divine potency' of her sexual encounters, and carries her exuberantly beyond them.

If sex in *The Butcher* is akin to 'a brush with the bottom line', this gives a different tenor to the narrator's painful state at the close of the novella. Discussing the

---

<sup>296</sup> Braidotti, 'The Politics of "Life" Itself', pp. 211 and 206.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., p. 208.



multiplicity of *zoē*, Braidotti acknowledges that ‘*zoē* or life as absolute vitality [...] is not above negativity, and it can hurt. It is always too much for the specific slab of enfleshed existence that single subjects can actualize’.<sup>299</sup> She therefore suggests the need for ‘reworking the pain into a threshold of sustainability, when and if possible: cracking but holding it still’.<sup>300</sup> This statement strongly evokes the influence of Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of ‘becoming’ on Braidotti’s work, in particular the idea of ‘becoming-animal’. For Deleuze and Guattari, animals are not metaphors or representations of human concepts, but are instead affective intensities that have the capacity to disarticulate the human from its presumed solidity and stability. Deleuze and Guattari position the process of ‘becoming animal’ as an entrance into the heterogeneity of the ‘pack’ over the stultifying primacy given to the human individual subject.<sup>301</sup>

However, Deleuze and Guattari do emphasise that these ‘line of flights’ are ‘not about too-violent destratifications’.<sup>302</sup> As they observe:

You have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform every dawn and you have to keep small supplies of significance and signification, if only to turn them against their own systems when the circumstances demand it, when things, persons, even situations, force you to; and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality.<sup>303</sup>

The more radical or destabilising aspects of ‘becoming animal’ through the force of *zoē* are only possible if one mobilises, but does not implode, one’s capacities and potentialities. The narrator’s slow return to human form at the end of *The Butcher*

---

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>301</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, p. 264.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

suggests that she herself has touched a limit, has reached the edge of dissolution through sex. Drawing upon Bataille, Williams suggests that the search ‘for that place where something goes too far, the place that exceeds our personal limits’ is intrinsic to pornography as a genre: the site where one is ‘beyond pleasure, dirty’, a point that is ‘perhaps even fatal’.<sup>304</sup> In *The Butcher* this line is ultimately that of the human/animal border. While sex pushes the narrator to the very edge of her humanity to the point of ‘cracking’, this is still a limit from which she can ‘reform every dawn’, invigorated and inspired.

The narrator’s alignment of animality with dynamic intensities and invigorating forces pushes beyond the novella’s preceding preoccupation with meat as a metaphor for understanding sexual desire with all its psychoanalytic connotations. Yet, as the novella ends with the narrator stumbling upon a hedge ‘abundant in roses’, a recurrent symbol of blood and the feminine, she describes how she ‘stuffed my mouth with them’ (70). Since Freud’s account of the verticality of the human is aligned with the instantiation of the taboo of menstruation, this closing image suggests that an embrace of the animal as the ‘outsider-within’ also potentially rejects the concurrent abjection of the maternal feminine that is implicit within the novella.<sup>305</sup> However, although the exuberant ending of *The Butcher* provides a counterpoint to Freud’s ambivalent discussion of the relation between the human and the animal, the narrator’s roaming flurry of bestial identifications dissolves animality into an invigorating affect. This tendency is shared in Reyes’s subsequent novella, *Lucie’s Long Voyage* (1992), which extends the equation of sexual pleasure and animality through a fairy-tale that begins with the female narrator, lost in the woods, entering into a prolonged sexual relation with a bear. While this suggests a similar

---

<sup>304</sup> Williams, ‘Pornography, Porno, Porn: Thoughts on a Weedy Field’, *Porn Studies*, 1:1/2 (2014), 24–40 (pp. 35 and 36)

<sup>305</sup> Freud, *Civilisation*, p. 46, n. 1.

investment in abandoning one's humanness as a 'delicious annihilation', in *Lucie's Long Voyage* the narrator acknowledges this as a phantasy, observing that despite her animal identifications, 'I could not step outside of myself, really become a cat, a tree or a pebble'.<sup>306</sup> Although *The Butcher's* self-reflexive tone does play with the phantasies that structure pornographic literature, its ending repeats the equation of animality with primal wildness.

The affective charge attributed to the quality of animality is more crucial to *The Butcher* than the slaughtered flesh of animals, which remains the 'absent referent' upon which the novella's central metaphor depends.<sup>307</sup> *The Butcher* therefore perpetuates 'becoming animal' as a process that 'fetishizes affect as an animal alterity that eludes rather than enters into the calculations of power'.<sup>308</sup> In this novella, becoming-meat is a temporary dissolution that precipitates a leap into animality as though a slice of pure affect. Meatiness is a means of capturing the ephemeral transformations that can be engendered *within* the human, a metaphor that understands how one can 'lose humanity' from the memory through the dissolving powers of sex (55), yet also enables the forgetting of the animal bodies on the butcher's hook, dangling limp, senseless and inert.

### Desiring Meat

Playing upon the frequent equation of the pornographic with the body-turned-meat, *The Butcher* provocatively structures its protagonist's sexual awakening around an

---

<sup>306</sup> Reyes, *Lucie's Long Voyage*, trans. by David Watson (London: Methuen, 1992 [1990]), pp. 27 and 55. Although little is written on the reception of this novella, a sense of discomfort at its depicted bestiality is intimated in 'The Big Sell' as a representative of Reed Publishers states of the release of Reyes's following work, *The Fatal Bodice* (1992): 'the new hardback obviously has to be smutty, but not as ... well, *Lucie's Long Voyage* involves animals. We're back to...'. Another representative replies ironically: 'Literature?'.

<sup>307</sup> Adams, *Sexual Politics*, p. 13.

<sup>308</sup> Shukin, p. 31.

explicit carnal thematic in which the butcher's shop and its 'forest of meat' become an apt milieu for the novella's foreplay. While readings of *The Butcher* focus on meat's implication in the novella's depiction of masculine domination and feminine submission — an ultimately fluctuating dynamic — the self-reflexive tone plays with cliché and convention to work the meatiness of the erotic body to its limit. The structural jump from the butcher's house to the ditch at the end of the novella does not resolve the ambivalence surrounding the flesh/meat dynamic, but rather exhausts it, the frisson of the theme becoming 'burnt out' like the narrator's desiring flesh. As the text ends with the narrator having temporarily gone beyond 'the tyranny of our sexes', having 'lost humanity from my memory' (55), to instead revel in a swarm of bestial identifications that invigorates her creativity, this reveals what Motte identifies as the 'real story' of *The Butcher*: 'that of a young woman coming to terms with the craft of writing'.<sup>309</sup> The text's 'true drama' is evocatively foreshadowed earlier in the novella when the narrator observes how:

the flesh of the bull before me was the same as that of the beast in the field, except that the blood had left it, the stream which carries life and carries it away so quickly, of which there remained only a few drops like pearls on the white paper (4).

The image of blood lingering as 'pearls on the white paper' indexes the process by which the lived desires of the flesh are 'carried away', leaving only the written word as testament to these all too ephemeral sensations.

Playing with the dynamic of masculine domination/feminine submission, the novella goes beyond it to reach a different limit: the 'outsider-within' of the animal in the human. While *Pig Tales* attends to butchery as both a figurative and literal threat

---

<sup>309</sup> Motte, p. 178.

for its hybrid woman/sow protagonist, *The Butcher* remains provocative for largely obscuring the ‘absent referent’ of the dead animal body through which its central carnal thematic is mobilised. The narrator’s reference to the ‘flesh of the bull’ in the above quote is one of the few examples of the novella explicitly recognising the origin of meat in animal bodies. Predominantly, it mobilises meat as a metaphor for the violently pleasurable dissolutions of the erotic body, which unleash animality as an invigorating affect aligned with the sensual, the instinctive and the primal.

Although this provides the novella with its triumphant ending, the narrator divested of shame and filled with creative fire, it disavows the animal bodies transformed into meat throughout the novella. Perhaps more curiously, in a text enraptured with the pleasures of the flesh and the ambivalent desire to capture these in words, eating is sparingly depicted within *The Butcher*, the ‘forest of meat’ largely left frozen in the vast refrigerators of the butcher’s shop. The following chapter consequently turns to an experimental literary text, *Diary of a Steak*, to explore the desire for meat as food. Rather than mobilise meat as a metaphor for human sexual arousal and pleasure, *Diary of a Steak* offers a seduction narrative that reflects on the paradoxical desires that structure meat eating.

## Chapter Four

### The Masquerade of Meat in Deborah Levy's *Diary of a Steak*

If a piece of steak infected with BSE underwent the talking cure, what might it have to say? *Diary of a Steak*, an experimental text published in 1997 by Deborah Levy, ostensibly offers an answer to this somewhat absurd question.<sup>310</sup> As its title suggests, the principal conceit behind *Diary of a Steak* is that the text 'gives voice' to a piece of meat: more specifically, a cut of one of the infamous 'mad cows' of the 1980s/1990s, now languishing in a supermarket freezer in the aftermath of the BSE crisis. If the attribution of vocality to 'literary beasts' has often been accompanied by accusations of anthropomorphism, *Diary of a Steak* implicitly acknowledges the impossibility of giving a voice to meat as the text's garbled form positions its narrator at the limits of the semantic realm.<sup>311</sup> The text therefore plays upon the dual valence of the British slang term for BSE-infected cattle, 'mad cow', as the narrator concurrently positions herself in a lineage of patients canonised in historical accounts of the interwoven construction of femininity and madness. 'Call me Emmy, Dora, Anna O, Augustine, *Buttercup*' (1, emphasis mine); *Diary of a Steak*'s narrator invites us to conclude that if BSE-infected meat could talk, it might well be diagnosed as hysterical.

Collapsing the voice of BSE-infected meat and the imagined discourse of the female hysteric into one discordant slipstream of memory, *Diary of a Steak*'s absurdist conceit has been seen to construct a 'protesting agency' that reveals the

---

<sup>310</sup> Deborah Levy, *Diary of a Steak* (London: Bookworks, 1997). All quotations are from this edition with page numbers included in the main body of the text. Levy was nominated for the Booker Prize in 2012 for the novel *Swimming Home* (London: And Other Stories and Faber and Faber, 2012).

<sup>311</sup> See Gillian Beer, 'Animal Presences: Tussles with Anthropomorphism', *Comparative Critical Studies*, 2:3 (2005), 311–22.

interwoven histories of violence enacted upon these two ‘mad cows’.<sup>312</sup> However, to attribute an explicitly didactic message to the text obscures the sense of danger that continually lurks within the voice. As *Diary of a Steak* plays upon the retrospective appraisal of hysteric discourse as an ‘allurement script’, this chapter argues that the dual-voiced narrator functions as a femme fatale figure, stimulating and thwarting the hermeneutic drive to penetrate the text.<sup>313</sup> *Diary of a Steak* thereby constructs a textual masquerade that brings questions of legibility, pathology and deceit to bear upon contemporary debates over the transparency of meat production and the circulation of diseased meat. This chapter explores how *Diary of a Steak* entwines the hermeneutically compelling bodies of BSE-infected meat and the female hysteric in a disorientating nexus of danger and desire that speaks to the contradictory ideals that govern industrialised meat.

### **Articulating Mimicry**

‘Is it possible to make a poetics of spleen, kidney and tongue?’ (11). This question is posed, and, in a sense, answered by *Diary of a Steak*. The text is ostensibly structured around an act of prosopopoeia by which the text gives voice through a journal form to a piece of steak during its short shelf life in a supermarket freezer. The publication date of *Diary of a Steak* does provide a clue that this is not just any slice of meat, but rather one infected with the notorious disease BSE, also known colloquially as ‘mad cow disease’. This illness, first identified in British cattle in November 1986, resulted in the mass culling of over eight million farm animals in the UK alone, introduced worldwide trade bans on the sale of British and European

---

<sup>312</sup> McHugh, ‘*Animal Farm*’, p. 35, n. 18.

<sup>313</sup> ‘Allurement script’ is taken from Katherine Cumings, *Telling Tales: The Hysteric’s Seduction in Fiction and Theory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 3.

meat and altered consumer perceptions of beef consumption.<sup>314</sup> Meat production has been cyclically affected by a number of livestock diseases, with foot-and-mouth one of the most recurrent and devastating. However, the potency of BSE centred on two particular facets of the disease: firstly, the discovery of its zoonotic capacities as it was found to have the ability to cross the species barrier from cow to human, believed to be evidenced by fatal outbreaks of the brain condition, variant Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease (vCJD), which caused humans to exhibit symptoms similar to those experienced by BSE-infected cattle.<sup>315</sup> The disease also distinguished itself due to the bitter irony behind its presumed cause, thought to be the result of feeding the waste products of animal slaughter back to livestock bound to be killed and rendered through the same process. Consequently, as Shukin argues, ‘mad cow disease holds something of a privileged place among the material symptoms of rendering’s logic, given that it springs from the carnal business of industrial rendering itself’.<sup>316</sup> Immanent within the process of animal slaughter and mimicking capitalism’s cannibalistic tendency to feed off its own networks of material production, BSE, with devastating irony, is the product of the logic through which the meat industry operates.

In her discussion of BSE, Shukin asserts that ‘when a disease mimics its material conditions, as mad cow disease does, it holds the potential of bringing these conditions to historical and political consciousness’.<sup>317</sup> She proceeds to wonder, ‘is it possible [...] to metaphorically articulate that mimicry to counterhegemonic

---

<sup>314</sup> For more on the discovery and impact of BSE on the British and European meat industry, see Richard Perren, *Taste, Trade and Technology: The Development of the Industrial Meat Industry Since 1840* (Aldershot and Basingstoke: Ashgate, 2006).

<sup>315</sup> Up until 2014, 177 human deaths from vCJD have been recorded. However scientists remain divided as to whether the prions believed to cause BSE and vCJD are endemic within the human population: see Ian Sample, ‘Risk of Infecting Patients With CJD Not Taken Seriously’, *Guardian*, (24 July 2014) <<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jul/24/risk-infecting-surgery-patients-cjd-not-taken-seriously-mps>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>316</sup> Shukin, p. 228.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid, p. 229.



effect?’<sup>318</sup> While it is the potential ‘counterhegemonic’ effect of *Diary of a Steak* that will in part be considered throughout this chapter, Levy’s text can be positioned precisely as such an attempt to ‘articulate the mimicry’ of ‘mad cow disease’. The most obvious example of this is the voice of *Diary of a Steak*’s narrator, who mimics the madness attributed to cattle with BSE by playing off the tendency to associate insanity with linguistic nonsense. Fragmented in form and frequently garbled in content, *Diary of a Steak* offers a spewing torrent of disintegrating words, endless repetitions and puns, intermingling languages and scripts and oblique intertextual allusions that are less cited than ‘shat out’, as Robert McKay so aptly puts it.<sup>319</sup>

This equation of madness with linguistic chaos finds a notable forebear in Nikolai Gogol’s farcical short story *Diary of a Madman* (1835): a reference that is echoed in the title of Levy’s text and their shared narrative structures. Gogol’s tale is written as a first-person diary, which narrates the Russian bureaucrat Poprishchin’s unwitting descent into madness. His eventual admittance into a mental institution is foreshadowed by the text’s disintegrating diary structure. Beginning rather banally on ‘October 3’, Poprishchin’s sense of linear time becomes deranged as entries refer to ‘Martober 86’ before eventually ending on the enigmatic ‘HT 34 EHT MI. YRAE’.<sup>320</sup> *Diary of a Steak* offers an account of one week in the shelf life of a piece of meat, yet distorts the temporal progression expected of the journal. In Levy’s text, linearity becomes repeatedly suspended into a perpetual present as the narrative stalls on certain days so that entries read ‘Tuesday’ (8) and then ‘Tuesday. again.’ (10). As in *Diary of a Madman*, *Diary of a Steak* challenges the forward progression expected

---

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Robert McKay, ‘BSE, Hysteria and the Representation of Animal Death: Deborah Levy’s *Diary of a Steak*’, in *Killing Animals*, ed. by The Animal Studies Group (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), pp. 145–69 (p. 153).

<sup>320</sup> Nikolai Gogol, *Diary of a Madman and Other Stories*, trans. and ed. by Andrew Crawford (New York: Dover Publications, 2006 [1835]), pp. 1, 14 and 18.

of the diary form, so that madness becomes equated with the distortion of temporal linearity.

Temporal confusion is not only generated by the non-linearity of the date headings in *Diary of a Steak*, but also through the doubled voice that is enfolded into Levy's text. Punning on the dual connotations of the British slang term 'mad cow' as applicable to both cattle with BSE and the figure of the excessive, irrational, erratic woman, *Diary of a Steak* offers 'a stimulated knot of memory traces' as a simultaneous memoir of one of the most iconic figurations of feminised madness: the female hysteric.<sup>321</sup> This doubling of the central act of prosopopoeia is evident from the opening page, as the narrator positions herself explicitly in a lineage of women canonised in historical accounts of the interwoven construction of femininity and madness, declaring 'call me Emmy, Dora, Bertha, Anna O, Augustine, Buttercup' (1). On the second page there is even a case history, which insinuates that Buttercup, 'Aka Crazy Daisy', should be added to the roll call of so-called 'mad women':

Case History. (for the learned assembled gentlemen)

Name: Buttercup

Aka Crazy Daisy

Nationality: English a vast repertoire of emotionally and  
physically unstable symptoms.

Born: East Grinstead.

Religion: Scientologist [...] (2)<sup>322</sup>

Not only does the narrator state affinity with hysteric patients such as Anna O and Dora, but the reference to the 'learned assembled gentlemen' in the case study

---

<sup>321</sup> This phrase is taken from Bronfen, who utilises it to describe the tendency for hysteric discourse to blur past, present and future: *The Knotted Subject: Hysteria and its Discontents* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. xiii.

<sup>322</sup> One idiosyncratic feature of *Diary of a Steak*'s presentation is the dramatically varying font size. I have replicated this when quoting the text.

foreshadows repeat allusions to Josef Breuer, Jean-Martin Charcot and Freud: three ‘gentleman’ doctors instrumental to the production of hysteria as a discourse. The oscillating ownership of the voice of the text presents a narrator who is both human and animal, offering the memories of a young cow, now turned into meat, and of a female hysteric: two figures seemingly separated by around one hundred years and a species divide.

From the very beginning of *Diary of a Steak*, these two voices simultaneously permeate the narrator’s address:

Gentlemen: Pank you for calling me to the  
lecture theatre today and in such a pretty  
nightie too. Do you think my nose is too big?  
I tell you what. We do have something in  
common after all. You eat sheep and I eat sheep.  
I’ll scratch your back if you scratch mine. If  
you want milk just tee hee. Mother was an  
eating machine. Father never got to breathe  
on her neck. He copulated with a large leather  
mock up of Mother and his semen was trans-  
ferred via a glass tube into her womb. I think  
I was a Friesian Hereford cross, with plentiful  
width. Mother showed me how to do it.  
Hysteria. I learnt all I know from her milk.  
She taught me everything. Perfected my falls.  
Rolled my eyes. She made me do it again and  
Again [...] (6–7)

This extract demonstrates the doubled voice at work throughout the text. The initial direct address to the ‘gentlemen’ in the lecture theatre evokes the hysteric performances staged under Charcot at the Parisian clinic of Salpêtrière. By contrast, the narrator’s description of herself as a ‘Friesian Hereford cross’ (two cattle breeds historically central to beef production in the UK) and her allusion to her conception through artificial insemination situate *Diary of a Steak* as the autobiographical reminiscences of a young cow turned into meat. Yet the two voices also merge within the extract, for example, around the closing lines: ‘Mother showed me how to do it.| Hysteria. I learnt all I know from her milk.| She taught me everything. Perfected my falls.| Rolled my eyes. She made me do it again and| again’ (7). This entanglement of voices ironically suggests the contemporary idea of the pushy ‘stage mother’ to evoke the physical and discursive similarities between female hysteria, as particularly understood between the 1880s and the 1920s, and BSE: both positioned as contagious, believed to be shaped by pathological maternal relations, resulting in symptoms like bodily contortions that were performed and documented as public spectacles.<sup>323</sup>

In analysing this passage, McKay argues that *Diary of a Steak* consequently ‘indicates *parallels* between hysteric and BSE-cow, a term that indicates similarity between the two while insisting on a necessary difference between them’.<sup>324</sup> McKay’s stress upon ‘the obvious political necessity not to equate women and animals (an age-old patriarchal gesture)’ is understandable.<sup>325</sup> And yet, to contend that *Diary of a Steak* points to a tidy parallel between the hysteric and BSE-infected

---

<sup>323</sup> For more on the discursive construction of hysteria between the 1880s and the 1920s, including the later emphasis on mother/daughter relations, see Rachel Bowlby, ‘Introduction’, in *Studies in Hysteria*, by Freud and Josef Breuer, trans. by Nicola Luckhurst (London: Penguin Books, 2004 [1952]), pp. vii–xxiii.

<sup>324</sup> McKay, p. 153.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

meat is exactly that: a little too neat, and therefore unable to capture the principal experimental gesture of Levy's text. What is so provocative and disorientating about *Diary of a Steak* is that these two voices — which might otherwise be assumed to be entirely distinct — are collapsed, so enmeshed that it is often impossible to tear them apart. *Diary of a Steak* is not the only text to have utilised a doubled, feminised voice to approach the cultural politics of BSE. Amongst a small body of literary texts that attend to this formative event in the landscape of 1980s and 1990s Britain, Jo Shapcott's seven 'Mad Cow' poems are a notable companion to *Diary of a Steak*. Published across two collections *Phrase Book* (1992) and *My Life Asleep* (1999), poems such as 'The Mad Cow in Love' and 'The Mad Cow Talks Back' similarly offer a poetic persona who inhabits the duality of the term 'mad cow'.<sup>326</sup> She is an unwitting participant in the BSE crisis, a cow who talks as though a human female in a tone that merges comedy and pathos. In *Diary of a Steak*, by contrast, the recurring collapse of two voices into one, however disjointed this at times appears, suggests that animality and hysteria are interwoven, rather than distinct and parallel histories.

This entanglement of vocality through such tortured prose does not simply invite us to identify shared symptoms of BSE and hysteria as though equivalent. Instead, *Diary of a Steak* nods to the insinuations of animality that have shaped understandings of the hysteric voice, and the vocality of madness in general.<sup>327</sup> In Gogol's *Diary of a Madman*, one key symptom of Poprishchin's growing insanity is his attribution of a voice to a dog, Madgie, who belongs to a high-class woman with whom the bureaucrat is besotted. Early in the story, Poprishchin is initially

---

<sup>326</sup> *Phrase Book* (1992) and *My Life Asleep* (1999) are published in Jo Shapcott, *Her Book: Poems 1988–1998* (London and New York: Faber and Faber, 2000), pp. 35–82 and 85–125.

<sup>327</sup> Michel Foucault discusses the modern institutionalisation of this alignment of animality and madness in 'Animality and Insanity', in *Animal Philosophy: Essential Reading in Continental Thought*, ed. by Matthew Calarco and Peter Atterton (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 65–71.

nonplussed when Madgie turns and speaks to him in human language. As the story progresses, however, he begins to recount the letters that he believes the dog has sent him. Though Madgie's missives are perfectly legible, he dismisses them as 'damned nonsense', criticising their 'doggish writing' which 'begins all right, but before you have got far the dog will out'.<sup>328</sup> His appraisal of Madgie's letters evokes the tendency to position animals at the very limits of, if not outside, the semantic realm: 'a place of communication beyond the limits of language'.<sup>329</sup> Ironically, it is Poprishchin's belief that Madgie is communicating with him through letters that becomes one of the key signs of his own mental deterioration. In *Diary of a Steak*, the narrator's repeated references to her own voice through animalising language also play upon the equation of animality with 'damned nonsense'. Declaring that she's 'barking' (9), and later again, 'I'm still barking!' (39), the narrator puns upon this term as the slang word for madness and the sound that dogs make. Making animal sounds, what Janet Beizer calls 'animal ventriloquism', was certainly observed in a number of accounts of female hysteria.<sup>330</sup> However, the canonisation of linguistic 'gush' as a key symptom of hysteria means that hysteric speech is already imbued with insinuations of animality as both the animal and hysteric voice are seen to operate in the field of noise or babble.

*Diary of a Steak* not only suggests the symbolic alignment of women and animals implied by the term 'mad cow', but also makes frequent allusions to the way that animal bodies were materially vital to the construction and treatment of hysteria. The narrator refers to the use of monkeys as experimental subjects in the emergence

---

<sup>328</sup> Gogol, pp. 8–9.

<sup>329</sup> Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Electric Animal: Towards a Rhetoric of Wildlife* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 49. Where animals are figured as talking in film and literature, Marc Shell argues that they are often given speech defects to distinguish their imperfect speech from that of humans: 'Animals That Talk', *differences*, 15:1 (2004), 84–107.

<sup>330</sup> Janet Beizer, *Ventriloquized Bodies: Narratives of Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1993).

of Darwinian psychology; she also obliquely acknowledges that it was experiments performed on pigs in a Rome slaughterhouse that led to the institutionalisation of electric shock treatment as a therapeutic technique practised upon those diagnosed as insane.<sup>331</sup> Just as significantly, the narrator also comments on one of the nineteenth-century ‘cures’ for madness inflicted upon hysterics: ‘Method. Meat. Morality [...] My great great grandmothers were fed to the mad citizens’ (18). The force-feeding of meat to female hysterics repeats the masculinised relation with meat, in particular red meat, as that which gives strength and vitality to the body.<sup>332</sup> Here, this relation becomes even more notable for mirroring the believed case of BSE, whereby animal remains were fed to livestock to promote growth; as the narrator wryly states, ‘you eat sheep and I eat sheep’ (18). *Diary of a Steak* therefore brings together the mimetic qualities attributed to hysteria and BSE as the cause of ‘madness’ and its historical treatment collapse together. Levy’s text consequently refuses to draw a clear distinction between the figure of the female hysteric and BSE-infected meat. While this runs counter to the claimed ‘political necessity’ to stress that the experiences of women and animals are different, *Diary of a Steak* plays continually with the convergence implied by the phrase ‘mad cow’, gesturing towards the discursively and materially entwined histories enfolded within the term.

### **The Masquerade of Meat**

Frequent nods to the entwined histories of violence against ‘mad cows’ give credence to the claim that *Diary of a Steak* envisages a ‘protesting agency’ for these

---

<sup>331</sup> See Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture* (New York: Virago, 1987 [1985]), pp. 129 and 206.

<sup>332</sup> The force-feeding of meat in a domestic setting is discussed in Freud’s study of Emmy von N in Freud and Breuer, pp. 77–78. Showalter notes that the belief that hysterics embodied an aggressively animated femininity also led to them being denied the ‘heating’ effect of red meat, p. 129.

two figures.<sup>333</sup> However, this description should not reduce the text's tortuously opaque prose to an explicit, didactic message. Instead, *Diary of a Steak* places the very possibility of constructing any coherent written narrative under continual pressure. While the diary-like structure encourages the assumption that behind the text is a sovereign subject capable of self-expression through written language, the narrator of *Diary of a Steak* perpetually gestures towards the potentially superior power of the spoken word.<sup>334</sup> Deploying a second-person direct address through which the narrator constructs a subject position for the repeatedly mentioned 'you', *Diary of a Steak* circumvents its textual form by suggesting itself as verbalised speech.

This tension between the spoken and the written word is evidenced from the very first line of the text, 'it's good to talk' (5). This was an iconic British Telecom (BT) advertising slogan used between 1990 and 1995, the popularity of which fundamentally changed the fortunes of BT. Robert Bean explains how the aim behind this successful campaign was to generate 'reciprocated confidence' for consumers by propagating the belief that 'the exchange of confidences between human beings leads to better communications, and, in turn, deeper relationships'.<sup>335</sup> This desire to mobilise 'reciprocated confidence' in 'better communications' and 'deeper relationships' is the central promise of what Shukin has termed 'telemobility': the connective capacities of the telecommunications industry. If the ideal of telecommunications remains that of 'painless transmission' between

---

<sup>333</sup> McHugh, 'Animal Farm', p. 35, n. 18.

<sup>334</sup> See McKay, p. 155.

<sup>335</sup> Robert Bean, "'It's Good to Talk' — The Story Behind the Campaign", *Campaign*, (16 September 2009) <<http://www.campaignlive.co.uk/news/938629/>> [accessed 26 June 2015]. Strikingly, given *Diary of a Steak*'s play with the hyperbolic loquaciousness attributed to the feminine voice, men were particularly targeted by this campaign through the use of actors such as Bob Hoskins. As Bean explains, the advertisers believed that when it came to communication: 'it was the blokes who didn't do it'.



consumers, Shukin argues that this phantasy was materially dependent upon the seizure of animal bodies, which were used as the principal subjects in early experiments with electricity due to the assumption that their bodies were intrinsically more conductive.<sup>336</sup> This investment in the capacities of ‘animal spirits’ endures; the belief that animals simply express and are therefore vehicles of transparent affect has led to them being used frequently as symbols for telecommunications advertising, which disavows their historical use as the bodies necessary to the industry’s development. By beginning the text with this particular 1990s advertising slogan, *Diary of a Steak* similarly encourages the impression that its ensuing narrative promises ‘painless transmission’ between the narrator and the ‘you’ repeatedly addressed by her, whilst hinting at the possible structure of disavowal that may lie behind this claim.

Given the doubled voice of the narrator, her opening comment that ‘it’s good to talk’ also provides a gloss on one of the most infamous treatments for female hysteria: the talking cure. Charcot’s regime at Salpêtrière in the 1880s left a photographic legacy that evidences his attempts to visualise the causes of hysteria utilising ‘optical machines’ to probe over and beneath the surface of the hysteric body.<sup>337</sup> The narrator acknowledges this history when she states that ‘the camera has been crucial to the study of my hysteria’ (8). However, she more frequently speaks of — and indeed, appears to be participating in — Breuer and Freud’s contrasting technique, as they developed and invested in the ‘talking cure’ as their primary

---

<sup>336</sup> Shukin, p. 133. Due to the belief that hysteria could be readily transmitted, hysteric bodies were also compared to ‘electricity’ to describe the ‘excitement’ that ‘seeks to discharge itself in more or less violent processes’: Freud and Breuer, p. 201. Jean-Martin Charcot furthermore undertook experiments utilising electricity to animate parts of his patients’ bodies: see Georges Didi-Huberman, *The Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Imagery of Salpêtrière* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2004).

<sup>337</sup> The phrase ‘optical machines’ is used by Didi-Huberman to describe the visualisation processes utilised by Charcot, p. 9. Freud visited Charcot in the mid-1880s for six months. While he admired his techniques, he turned towards the therapeutic capacities of the aural over the visual in the form of the talking cure: see Bowlby, p. viii.

means of treating hysteria. Predicated on the belief that ‘it’s good to talk’, the ‘talking cure’ attempted to draw out the speech of the female hysteric.<sup>338</sup> Since the hysteric’s discourse was viewed as ‘fragmentary and discontinuous’, ‘preserving and shielding from traumatic knowledge’, the therapeutic aspect of the talking cure sought to produce a coherent narrative that would not only allow for catharsis, but also for the possibility of interpretation by an analyst through which the ‘knot’ of hysteric speech could be unravelled.<sup>339</sup> Since translation therefore lies at the heart of the talking cure as the analyst works to render hysteric speech intelligible, the hysteric’s discourse is rarely accessible in its unmediated form; instead, it can only be imagined or inferred from reading the case studies of Breuer and Freud. *Diary of a Steak* is not, therefore, a pastiche of hysteric discourse as that which can be easily excised and separated from its diagnosis and interpretation, but instead performs its characterisation through the words of Breuer and Freud, thereby evoking the meaning of pastiche precisely as an imitation of an imitation.<sup>340</sup>

Although the talking cure can be seen as a narrative technique aimed at transforming the opaque, contorted and fragmented into coherence, the hysteric tends to resist this flattening of complexity; as Bronfen states, ‘hysteria defies closure’.<sup>341</sup> Accordingly, the maxim ‘it’s good to talk’ becomes increasingly mutated and broken down as the text progresses. By page nine, the narrator states that it is ‘goo o talk’ and then simply ‘o alk’. The text becomes more and more difficult to voice orally; this is not, as McKay notes, a work that can be easily read aloud.<sup>342</sup> The gradual distortions of the text’s opening line consequently undermine the phantasy of

---

<sup>338</sup> As Bowlby notes, Anna O not only inspired the talking cure, but also provided Freud and Breuer with its name, p. ix.

<sup>339</sup> Bronfen, *Knotted Subject*, pp. 53 and 42.

<sup>340</sup> Dyer, *Pastiche* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 2.

<sup>341</sup> Bronfen, *Knotted Subject*, p. xiii.

<sup>342</sup> McKay, p. 155.

‘painless transmission’ that lies behind both the telecommunications industry and the assumed cathartic effect of the talking cure, as the text continually obfuscates the clarity that it ostensibly promises.

This verbal incontinence renders it difficult to describe *Diary of a Steak* as a narrative or its central voice as anything so concrete as a narrator. Not only does this speak to the extent to which hysteric speech is seen as an attack on, or resistance of, narrative, but it also gives credence to Val Plumwood’s assertion that meat ‘totally erases the speaking position: there is no possibility of encountering it as expressive, narrative subject’.<sup>343</sup> However, the derangement of meaning continually performed by the feminised voice of the hysteric/meat positions the text as a ‘seduction narrative’.<sup>344</sup> Connor argues that the seductive voice works ‘by conjuring *itself* up as a precious and fascinating object’.<sup>345</sup> Identifying the insistence in histories of hysteria upon ‘female effusiveness’, Beizer observes that hysterics were seen as ‘hyperbolically loquacious’, delivering ‘an irrepressible flow of words and noises’.<sup>346</sup> Fascination with the seemingly unstoppable linguistic gush of hysteric speech allowed for its recuperation as a fetish object for those seeking to interpret it. Through this reversal, ‘indefinability is endowed with the portent of meaning, secretions cause secrets, emotional overflow suggests lyrical flow, delirium is the troubled voice of revelation, and speech loss opens the space of an incommunicable

---

<sup>343</sup> Val Plumwood, ‘Babe: The Tale of Speaking Meat’, in *Animal, Anima, Animus*, ed. by Linda Weintraub, Marketta Seppälä, and Jari-Pekka Vanhala (Pori: Pori Art Museum, 1999), pp. 243–64 (p. 246).

<sup>344</sup> This term references Freud’s initial hypothesis that female hysteria was the product of childhood seduction by the father. It is used by Cumings to concurrently suggest the fascinating, enrapturing qualities attributed to hysteric speech, p. 11. For more on this transition in Freud’s thought, see John Kerr, *A Dangerous Method: The Story of Jung, Freud and Sabrina Spielrein* (New York: Atlantic Books, 2012), p. 38.

<sup>345</sup> Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 38.

<sup>346</sup> Beizer, p. 43.

sublime’.<sup>347</sup> As the supposed ‘lack’ signalled by the hysteric voice became transfigured into an enigmatic yet profound plenitude, the case studies of Freud and Breuer have been read as ‘allurement scripts’: ‘so structured that it is difficult to disentangle the seduced from the seducer, to attribute power to a single subject, or to say who has finally been had by whom’.<sup>348</sup> The hysteric and the analyst are caught in a fluctuating dynamic driven by fascination with the revelatory mysteries seemingly shimmering within hysteric discourse.

The allure of pursuing an elusive clarity speaks to Joan Leach’s simultaneous assertion that ‘the BSE story, like all good detective stories, adds a narrative twist to the scientific sleuthing for certainty’.<sup>349</sup> While *Diary of a Steak* functions largely outside of genre constraints and is therefore not a ‘detective story’ per se, Leach’s claim that BSE has a ‘seductive’ appeal to the hermeneutic drive only increases the alluring quality of the narrator’s dual voice in *Diary of a Steak*. The narrator is often explicitly flirtatious, repeatedly asking, for instance, ‘do you want to hear my erotic music?’ (5), a question that also features on the cover of the book, which depicts a piece of red steak inserted with a placard bearing this slogan. Yet, in the charged sensual overtones of her voice lies danger for those tempted to tangle with her:

Lingering on a bed of plastic parsley ...  
(‘Borowski’s Elite Meats’)  
prime cut, a little yellow creamy fat, the  
ambrosia of the ancients ... many died with my  
flesh stuck between their teeth  
[...] Over indulgence in me can

---

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>348</sup> Cumings, p. 3.

<sup>349</sup> Joan Leach, ‘Madness, Metaphors and Miscommunication: The Rhetorical Life of Mad Cow Disease’, in *The Mad Cow Crisis: Health and the Public Good*, ed. by Scott C. Ratzan (London: UCL Press, 1998), 119–130 (p. 124).

make the heart beat a little faster and then a  
little faster; I have laid men out on the deep  
pile carpets of restaurants clutching their  
hearts, watched them disappear onto stretchers  
into ambulances [...] (8-9)

Within this passage, the narrator not only characterises herself as an attractive figure, but also uses the structure of the double entendre to suggest she is a literal heartbreaker. The narrator positions herself in an eroticised pose — ‘lingering on a bed of parsley’ (8) — and describes her physical appearance in alluring terms — ‘prime cut, a little yellow creamy fat’ (8) — thereby evoking the tendency to ‘prettify’ cuts of meat in the butcher’s shop to make them more appealing to the consumer. Yet, the desirability of the red meat is fatal to those who consume her as she states: ‘I have laid men out on the deep| pile carpets of restaurants clutching their hearts’ (9). While the euphemistic quality of this description retains the conflation of sexual and alimentary desire, the specific reference to ‘the| ambrosia of the ancients’ quotes from Roland Barthes’s deconstruction of the mythic qualities attributed to steak. Attending to how steak is reified as meat in its ‘rawest’ and most ‘potent’ form, Barthes describes how it is viewed as ‘the heart of meat, it is meat in its purest state, and whoever partakes of it assimilates a bull-like strength’.<sup>350</sup> Through her string of eroticised come-ons, the narrator plays upon the mythical desirability of red meat, yet she utilises the double entendre to concurrently destroy this idealisation of steak as powerful and life-giving.

---

<sup>350</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers (London: Vintage Books, 2009 [1957]), p. 69.

Though *Diary of a Steak* is far from a crime drama, the narrator's voice is closer to that of the detective genre's iconic femme fatale than to a protesting victim. Through such characterisation, Levy plays upon the pre-existing alignment of the feminine voice with danger. Wielded by the Sirens, the femme fatale, the operatic soprano and the hysteric, the feminine voice has not only been positioned as closer to song and noise, but also to deception.<sup>351</sup> The femme fatale characterisation of the 'mad cow' positions *Diary of a Steak* as a textual masquerade, continually suggesting a tension between surface and depth. Masquerade is tied to the feminine, as outlined in Joan Riviere's formative account. For Riviere, masquerade is the 'hidden danger' behind the mask of femininity (or 'womanliness', as she terms it). The pose of femininity is an attempt to court male approval, but is adopted to disguise the desire and capacity to usurp the masculine position. As Riviere elaborates, one may assume 'a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men'.<sup>352</sup> Throughout *Diary of a Steak*, one can note such moments of apparent ingratiation, such as when the narrator mentions her 'pretty nightie' (6), or obligingly offers the chance to hear her 'erotic music' (5). More broadly, the babbling quality of the text also suggests attempts to avert 'retribution' by playing off the enduring association of the feminine voice with a verbal incoherence that is explicitly contrasted by the narrator with the 'proper' speech of the masculine subject: 'The men who carried the plastic| happy trays to the table, so polite and niice to| each other, co-operating, saying all the right| things [...]' (10). Although the reference to the men 'saying all the right| things' diverges from the

---

<sup>351</sup> For more on the feminine voice, see Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Towards a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. by Paul Kottman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005). She positions the Sirens as direct vocal precursors to the femme fatale. These mythological creatures seduced sailors with the 'lethality of a pure, harmonious, powerful and irresistible voice', p. 103.

<sup>352</sup> Joan Riviere, 'Womanliness as Masquerade', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 10 (1929), 303–13 (p. 303).

narrator's vocal disarray — her ostensible 'good talk' that is more akin to 'goo talk' — the knowing tenor to the voice suggests that this hyperbolic performance of vocal lack is a masquerade, obscuring the hidden danger beneath the surface that is able to attack and even destroy the masculinised carnivorous consumer.

The narrator's performance of a masquerade of meat speaks to the fear that duplicitous doubles are rife across the meat industry, anxieties that are exemplified (although far from exhausted) by the BSE crisis of the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, in 2013 — ironically just after the European Union had re-authorised the use of animal feeds formed of Processed Animal Proteins (PAPs) banned in 1997 — it was discovered that horsemeat had been masquerading as beef on European supermarket shelves, including many in the UK.<sup>353</sup> As the discovery gained increased attention and the tenor of a public scandal in the British media, journalists clamoured to uncover who knew about the swap, who was responsible and how to detect the substitution in the meat itself. As questions of legibility, complicity and knowledge consequently emerged as a defining part of the horsemeat panic, the notion of a masquerade of contaminated meat became an explicit reality for the meat industry.<sup>354</sup>

---

<sup>353</sup> The EU ruling allowed feed made from pigs and poultry to be fed to fish from June 2013, although the ban remains on cattle, sheep and goat remains: Bruce Crumley, 'As the Horsemeat Hysteria Spreads, EU Opens a Mad-Cow Can of Worms', *Time*, (19 February 2013) <<http://world.time.com/2013/02/19/as-the-horsemeat-hysteria-spreads-e-u-opens-a-mad-cow-can-of-worms/>> [accessed 26 June 2015]. In keeping with *Diary of a Steak's* 'knot of memory traces', the horsemeat scandal of 2013 has an historical echo in the headline of a 1960s *Guardian* article criticising the trade in horsemeat in Ireland. This proclaimed 'scandal' is not concerned with duplicitous doublings, but instead evokes the British taboos on eating horsemeat that were another factor in the 2013 panic: see 'From the Archive, 20 January 1960: Horsemeat Scandal: Irish PM Defends Shipping of Livestock', *Guardian*, (29 January 2014) <<http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2014/jan/20/horsemeat-scandal-ireland-1960>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>354</sup> Implicated parties claimed to have 'unwittingly' processed horsemeat in place of beef. The UK shadow environmental minister, Barry Gardiner, observed that 'industry has been able to commit what appears to be a criminal offence — selling the public horsemeat falsely labelled as beef — and just say they are sorry and they didn't know'. While Gardiner indicates how the prime defence was 'not knowing', his cautious language over 'what appears to be a criminal offence' evidences the epistemological uncertainty that overshadowed investigations: see Felicity Lawrence, 'Where Did the 29% Horse in Your Tesco Burger Come From?', *Guardian*, (22 October 2013) <<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/oct/22/horsemeat-scandal-guardian-investigation-public-secrecy>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

Yet such uncertainties are more endemic in meat production than the seemingly spontaneous eruptions of these moral panics otherwise suggest. As Sarah Franklin observes, ‘from the point of view of modern animal husbandry, the danger of contagion is that no one really knows if it is there or not’.<sup>355</sup> The deceit at the heart of masquerade, the possibility that something is not how it appears on its surface, is not simply a textual performance by the narrator of *Diary of a Steak*, but also is central to the clandestine circulation of diseased meat across the industry.

The fear that meat will masquerade in such a way as to hide the possibility of ‘contagion’ can also be found in other contemporary debates over meat production in the UK, including those surrounding halal meat. Increasingly, British media articles report consumer anxieties about eating halal meat ‘unwittingly’.<sup>356</sup> These predominantly centre on the fear that halal meat has ‘infiltrated’ the British supermarket. Writing in the *New Statesman*, Mehdi Hasan acknowledges that antipathy towards halal meat has often been posed as a question of animal rights due to discomfort at the potential pain and distress caused to animals through ritual slaughter methods. However, he argues that the particular debate surrounding halal in the UK has become a proxy for wider fears regarding the perceived ‘invasion’ of ‘traditional’ British culture by Islamic practices. He has therefore linked concerns over halal meat with debates over the wearing of the hijab and the niqab as all are positioned as signs that Islam is infiltrating Western life by some of the mainstream

---

<sup>355</sup> Sarah Franklin, *Dolly Mixtures: The Remaking of Genealogy* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 170.

<sup>356</sup> See, for example, ‘A Meaty Question: Who Should Regulate Kosher and Halal Food?’, *Economist*, (9 February 2013) <<http://www.economist.com/news/international/21571419-who-should-regulate-kosher-and-halal-food-meaty-question>> [accessed 26 June 2015]. While the article discusses the regulation of halal *and* kosher food, it uses loaded language in positioning concerns over halal meat as intensified by the ‘swelling’ of the Muslim population in Western countries.



British press.<sup>357</sup> What is notable about Hasan's equation of concerns over halal meat and the hijab and the niqab is that all three are seen through the prism of such media as dangerous attempts to thwart visibility and transparency, returning us again to anxieties at the heart of the masquerade.

Since anxiety is particularly linked to the failure to secure transparency in meat production, McKay makes the observation that outbreaks of livestock diseases and resultant food panics have prompted consumers to become increasingly beholden to an emergent ideal of knowing where one's meat comes from.<sup>358</sup> McKay's claim can be evidenced through an increased emphasis upon organic farming practices and localism in food consumption as part of a 'new carnivore' movement: a shift discussed further in Chapter Five.<sup>359</sup> However, anxieties about the circulation of ersatz or diseased meat are far from new. The introduction of large industrial slaughterhouses in Western Europe and the USA throughout the 1800s led to the emergence of a fundamental and enduring paradox apparent in this institutionalised exile. While the gradual outlawing of private slaughterhouses enabled meat production to be regularly monitored by health inspectors, the expulsion of slaughter to the edges of towns and cities established the sensual vacuum of the abattoir: a space that is ideally cut off from sight, sound and smell.<sup>360</sup>

Consumer anxieties about the circulation of meat unfit for human consumption became notably heightened following the publication of Sinclair's *The Jungle* in 1906. Shocked by its sensational insights into the daily workings of the

---

<sup>357</sup> Mehdi Hasan, 'Mehdi Hasan on the Not-So-Hidden Fear Behind Halal Hysteria', *New Statesman*, (9 May 2012) <<http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/politics/2012/05/halal-hysteria>> [accessed 26 June 2015]. Hasan also cites bills brought before the British, French and Dutch parliaments in 2012 that sought stricter labelling on halal meat, and, in the case of The Netherlands, a complete ban. See also Jonathan Burt, 'Conflicts Around Slaughter in Modernity', in *Killing Animals*, ed. by The Animal Studies Group, pp. 120–44.

<sup>358</sup> McKay, p. 148.

<sup>359</sup> See Parry, 'Gender and Slaughter'.

<sup>360</sup> For more on this shift, see *Meat, Modernity*, ed. by Young Lee.

Chicago meatpacking industry (colloquially dubbed ‘Porkopolis’), readers were outraged that they had been sold ersatz and unfit meat. As this novel prompted the introduction of the Pure Food Act in the USA in 1906, Justin Pickavance positions reception to *The Jungle* as evidencing a new public demand for ‘gastronomic realism’: an enlivened desire for complete transparency about the quality and origin of the meat on one’s dinner plate.<sup>361</sup> While food labelling subsequently became normalised as a fundamental tenet of hygiene and safety standards in the industry, panics such as the BSE crisis and the horsemeat scandal reveal the fragility of this norm of transparency rather than its emergence. The suggestion that meat production has increasingly been brought into public view obscures the paradox of visibility that governs industrialised meat. This contradiction centres on the levelling of a demand for transparency at an industry that maintains the desirability of its product precisely through veiling its processes of production, whether by ensuring that meat products visually disguise their origins in living animals or by curtailing access to animal slaughter, even of the most ‘organic’, ‘free-range’ or ‘healthy’ livestock. *Diary of a Steak* therefore suggests that the epistemological uncertainty that surrounds meat panics, and meat production more broadly, is far from unusual. Instead, industrial meat is always potentially caught up in the possibility of masquerade as a condition of its desirability.

### **Struggling to be Human**

Knowledge and complicity are debated when it comes to contemporary food scandals, yet these have also been sites of tension in theoretical conceptualisations of the masquerade. Riviere insinuates that masquerade is not a deliberate performance,

---

<sup>361</sup> Justin Pickavance, ‘Gastronomic Realism: Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*: The Fight for Pure Food and the Magic of Mastication’, *Food and Foodways*, 11:2/3, (2003), 87–112.

but could rather be understood as part of ‘the essential nature of fully-developed femininity’.<sup>362</sup> This is challenged by Mary Ann Doane, who argues that masquerade’s excessive or hyperbolic femininity thwarts the conventional understanding of femininity as closeness; instead, ‘the masquerade, in flaunting femininity, holds it at a distance’.<sup>363</sup> For Doane, understanding masquerade as a distancing mechanism precludes the alignment of the hysteric and the femme fatale; instead, masquerade is in fact ‘anti-hysterical, for it works to effect a separation between the cause of desire and oneself’.<sup>364</sup> However, Doane’s argument that the hysteric can effect no such distancing obscures the implication of both the femme fatale and the hysteric in the question of intentionality: is their femininity a conscious, parodic performance, or do they wield power ‘despite themselves’?

Like the femme fatale, the hysteric has frequently been positioned as ‘an arch simulator, deceiver and seductress’.<sup>365</sup> The suggestion that hysteric speech takes ‘the structured form of fiction and lies’ has compounded explicitly misogynistic readings of her as paradigmatic of femininity: not only excessive, babbling and incoherent, but also deceptive and untrustworthy.<sup>366</sup> Yet, it is precisely the ambiguity of her position that prevents the female hysteric from being co-opted into a totalising discourse that speaks only of her passive victimisation. *Diary of a Steak* operates within this ambivalence as the narrator observes that ‘I have made a career out of melancholy and mania’ (7). Intimating the narrator’s potential gain from her performances of hysterical symptoms, often historically encouraged and elicited, this line nods to the manipulation of which the hysteric has been accused. However, as

---

<sup>362</sup> Riviere, p. 313.

<sup>363</sup> Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), p. 25.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>365</sup> Bronfen, *Knotted Subject*, p. xi.

<sup>366</sup> Beizer, p. 43. See also Otto Weininger’s description of hysteria as ‘the organic crisis of the organic untruthfulness of woman’ in Kerr, p. 74.

the doubling of vocality within the text simultaneously implicates the BSE-infected cow in courting such publicity, this undermines the suggested deceitfulness of the narrator. The seemingly absurd notion that the farmyard cow is simulating madness for profit plays into the ambiguities surrounding the narrator's performance of lethal lack.

Although this uncertainty is predicated on a presumed gap between the potentially deliberate performance by the human femme fatale figure of the hysteric and the involuntary spasms of the BSE-infected cow, the femme fatale figure has long been imbued with animality. In *Darwin's Screens: Evolutionary Aesthetics, Time and Sexual Display in Cinema* (2009), Barbara Creed observes how the cinematic femme fatale has been visually associated with animals, whether in the form of the 'spider woman', the 'dragon lady' or the 'black widow'. As Creed argues, 'the femme fatale's animal persona is designed primarily to intensify her seductive allure', emphasising her exoticism by situating her closer to a primal vision of nature and the body.<sup>367</sup> This animalisation heightens her danger by giving her a predatory quality; the female black widow spider, for example, is infamous precisely for her tendency towards 'sexual cannibalism' as she eats the male following sex.<sup>368</sup> In *Diary of a Steak*, this particular relation is reversed; the monstrous femininity of its doubled 'mad cow' narrator does not simply eat the male, but rather feeds on the implicitly masculine consumer after he has devoured her.

---

<sup>367</sup> Creed, p. 104.

<sup>368</sup> For more on the link between the femme fatale and predatory animals, see Grosz, 'Animal Sex: Libido as Desire and Death', in *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism*, ed. by Grosz and Probyn (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 278–99. Accounts of sexual behaviour in female animals in the realm of the sciences also tend to depict them as femme fatales by focusing on their threateningly active behaviour after sex: see Liam Dougherty, Emily R. Burdfield-Steel and David M. Shuker, 'Sexual Stereotypes: The Case of Sexual Cannibalism', *Animal Behaviour*, 85 (2013), 313–22.

Given that the femme fatale is usually associated with explicitly predatory or exotic animals — dragons and spiders, for example — there is something comically absurd about the domesticated cow flaunting her erotic allure. The animality of the femme fatale does not, however, solely function so as to enfold within her seductive qualities an intimation of death that literalises the promise of *la petite mort*. In specifically describing the femme fatale as ‘an essentially Darwinian creature’, Creed locates her at the border between ‘civilised’ humanity and primal animality, threatening the boundary between the two.<sup>369</sup> The femme fatale inhabits this tension particularly through the discordance between her attractive appearance and her compromised reproductive capacities; she is ‘the antithesis of the maternal — sterile or barren, she produces nothing in a society that fetishizes production’.<sup>370</sup> In *Diary of a Steak*, this pathological lethality is not the ‘antithesis of the maternal’, but is rather its reverse face since the circulation of hysteria and BSE was linked to the mother as the site of transmission (as the narrator states, ‘Mother showed me how to do it’ (6)). Nonetheless, the power of the femme fatale narrator is not wielded despite her conventional domesticated position, but through it as she betrays its norms of (re)production, indicating how domestication is always accompanied by the spectre of failure.<sup>371</sup> Just as the BSE-infected cow became seen as a waste product, so too was the middle-class female hysteric viewed as dangerously subverting the reproductive demand placed upon bourgeois femininity.<sup>372</sup> If the cow seems an unlikely femme fatale figure, her threat lies precisely in her violently disruptive betrayal of a domestication that is always haunted by the possibility of failure.

---

<sup>369</sup> Creed, p. 107.

<sup>370</sup> Doane, p. 2.

<sup>371</sup> Franklin, p. 56.

<sup>372</sup> As Freud states in *Studies in Hysteria*, hysterics are seen as ‘the flowers of humanity [...] sterile [...] but beautiful’, p. 241.

The narrator's repeated references to 'falling, falling' therefore suggest that the 'mad cow' has the potential to 'expose the weaknesses of civilisation'.<sup>373</sup> Ostensibly an allusion to the bodily contortions and stumbling associated with female hysterics and BSE-infected cattle, 'falling' also speaks to a potential collapse from 'erect' humanity into horizontal animality.<sup>374</sup> This motif of BSE as an ontological descent is also found in a number of Shapcott's 'Mad Cow' poems. In 'The Mad Cow in Love', for example, the poetic persona declares in the final lines, 'I want you earthly| including all the global terrors and harms| which might come when we fall| backwards into the world of horn and hoof'.<sup>375</sup> Given that Shapcott's mad cow appears innocent of her own predicament, there is particular irony in her failure to recognise that she herself would already be considered to occupy this realm of 'horn and hoof'.<sup>376</sup> By contrast, the rather more knowing femme fatale narrator of *Diary of a Steak* wields puns that suggest her awareness of her own dangerous position in inhabiting this 'fall backwards'.

The doubled voice of the narrator therefore stages the weakness of the species border, wielding an 'abject or devolutionary aesthetic' that combines the alluring qualities of the femme fatale with her much less studied animality.<sup>377</sup> However, the unruly narrative of *Diary of a Steak* does not merely enact this 'fall' through the centralised voice of the narrator as the primary site of ontological descent. In keeping with the supremely mimetic qualities attached to hysteria and the virile contagion associated with zoonotic disease, multiple voices are temporarily drawn to the foreground to suggest their own descent into hysteria. The most striking example is

---

<sup>373</sup> Creed, p. 106.

<sup>374</sup> This iconic symptom of hysteria is also referenced in the title of a recent feature film on the subject, *The Falling* (Morley, 2014).

<sup>375</sup> Shapcott, 'The Mad Cow in Love', pp. 71–2.

<sup>376</sup> See also Isabel Gallegmore, 'A Dark Ecology: Environmental Cartoons, Jo Shapcott's Mad Cow Poems and the Motivational Function of the Comic Mode', *Green Letters*, 17:2 (2013), 151–63.

<sup>377</sup> Creed, p. 105.

the parodied voice of the male English diplomat. In the case history at the beginning of *Diary of a Steak*, Buttercup refers to her nationality as ‘English a vast repertoire of emotionally and| physically unstable symptoms’ (6) This is an oblique allusion to Elaine Showalter’s study *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture* (1985), another garbled intertext woven into *Diary of a Steak*. In this, Showalter describes the English regard for itself as ‘the global headquarters for insanity’ in the nineteenth century, being at the forefront of its construction as a discourse and its resultant diagnosis and treatment.<sup>378</sup> Such pride is ironised in *Diary of a Steak* as this line prefigures the threat posed to the nation as beef, historically a galvanising symbol of England, became infected with mad cow disease.

*Diary of a Steak* stages this encroaching danger through the voice of the diplomat:

The Minister from Whitebait has promised  
Europa he will do everything in his power to  
avoid lunacy in the English herd —  
He made a speech

Tell the Greeks.

Tell Luxembourg

Tell the Portuguese they’re

Tell the French

Tell the Italians their gnocchi has a mental  
disorder

And the Danish they’ve lost the plot

---

<sup>378</sup> Showalter, p. 7.

The Neverlands  
The Germans and their bratwurst holograms  
Tell the Spanish about their poppies salamis  
Tell Belgium they're silly  
Tell Denmark  
Finland  
Sweden  
Republic of Ireland  
Tell Poland they're homosexual  
Don't cry, please don't cry (12)

The feverish quality of this passage gives credence to Shukin's claim that 'not only is the purity of a nation's meat representative, on a deeply affective level, of its domestic economy, meat also enciphers ideological investments in the masculinist virility and racial purity of the national body'.<sup>379</sup> Here the rages at other European nations and their most iconic meats are framed as panicked responses to the devalued position of one of England's valued domestic products, its cattle. The final lines 'Tell Poland they're homosexual| Don't cry, please don't cry' (12) insinuate the anxiety-inducing challenge to 'masculinist virility' posed by the 'madness' of English meat. What is particularly notable here is that the charge of 'homosexuality' and the self-admonishment about crying obliquely acknowledge a more obscured figure in the genealogy of hysteric discourse: the male hysteric. As Mark Micale argues, the feminisation of madness shrouded male hysteria in accusations of being a 'failed' masculinity.<sup>380</sup> This speech, spitting out insults in a hyperbolic rendition of

---

<sup>379</sup> Shukin, p. 227.

<sup>380</sup> Mark Micale argues that the feminisation of male hysteria intensified throughout the nineteenth century as hysteria came to be understood through a 'regime of differences' that divided male and



nationalist, if not outright xenophobic, fervour, appears an attempt to evade the contagious, mimetic energies of hysteria. Yet, its increasingly deranged content — the outraged references to the German ‘bratwurst holograms’ and Spanish ‘poppies salamis’ (12) — insinuates an inability to maintain a stable, implicitly masculine, national ego, here dissolving into the aforementioned ‘vast repertoire of emotionally and physically unstable symptoms’ (6).

That there is a defensive aggression to the passage resonates with Juliet Mitchell’s emphasis upon ‘the seductions *and* rages’ of the hysteric (emphasis mine).<sup>381</sup> While *Diary of a Steak* frequently draws attention to the violences enacted upon ‘mad cows’, the aggressiveness of the voice in this passage highlights the violence of the hysteric’s narrative rather than merely its passivity or allure. Mitchell utilises her emphasis upon the ‘rages’ of the hysteric to frame her broader argument that hysteria should be understood less through the prism of child-parent relations than as the threat of usurpation posed by siblings. While Mitchell positions hysteria as ‘a response to certain aspects of what it means to be *human*’ (emphasis mine), she explains that her understanding of ‘sibling’ is to ‘include all those who stand in the position of siblings, whether biologically related or not’.<sup>382</sup> *Diary of a Steak* suggests the possibility of expanding Mitchell’s already extensive mobilisation of ‘sibling’ to position hysteria as a defence mechanism against the recognition of the ‘mad cow’ as a sibling or kin as a consequence of the BSE crisis.

While the pastiche of hysteric discourse offered by *Diary of a Steak* continually warns against attempting to ‘solve’ this text or diagnose its symptoms, its doubled voice positions the disruption of the human/animal border as integral to

---

female hysteria: *Hysterical Men: The Hidden History of Male Nervous Illness* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 55.

<sup>381</sup> Juliet Mitchell, *Mad Men and Medusas: Reclaiming Hysteria and the Effect of Sibling Relationships on the Human Condition* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p. x.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42 and x.

fears regarding BSE and hysteria. The implication that hysteria is both imbued with animality *and* a defence against it as a relation of affinity or kinship, particularly one that threatens death and disease, speaks to a footnote in Freud's discussion of Emmy von N. in *Studies in Hysteria*. In this case study, Freud reports her fear of mice stemming from a member of her family throwing a dead one at her; he also describes her aversion to eating cooked meat due to its cold, hard texture.<sup>383</sup> In a footnote, Freud intimates uncertainty regarding Emmy's antipathy towards mice, declaring that he is 'unable to distinguish whether this is a symbolic fear of animals or a primitive horror'.<sup>384</sup> However, as Emmy recounts other encounters with corpses, this suggests a link between animals and death.<sup>385</sup> Bronfen has advocated a turn away from reading hysteria as conflicted or repressed sexual desire towards understanding it 'as a message about vulnerability [...] perhaps above all, the vulnerability of the body, given its mutability and mortality'.<sup>386</sup> Since the species border has been upheld precisely by displacing 'the bonds of materiality and embodiment' — including vulnerability — onto animals, it is they who typically bear 'the mutability and mortality' of embodiment.<sup>387</sup> As the disavowal of these 'bonds of materiality' is a key mechanism through which the human subject attempts to establish itself, this gives a different tenor to Mitchell's claim that hysteria is a response to 'the human condition'. In *Diary of a Steak*, this is the perpetual struggle to assert oneself as 'human' in the face of uncanny 'siblings' or kin that continually threaten to dissolve the (unstable) species border.

What room does this leave for the animal apart from it being co-opted as a tool through which to outline the defensive formation of human subjectivity? While

---

<sup>383</sup> Freud in *Studies in Hysteria*, pp. 54 and 77–78.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98, n. 16.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>386</sup> Bronfen, *Knotted Subject*, p. xiii.

<sup>387</sup> Wolfe, *What is Post-Humanism?*, p. xii.

anxieties played out through meat may be a site of hysteria in *Diary of a Steak*, the notion of ‘hysterical meat’ is gestured towards as a conceptual impossibility when the narrator states that ‘I lost my mind before they culled it’ (11). This line is not only a reminder that you first have to be attributed with a mind to ‘lose it’, but also that the animal body bears the cost of the threat and fears of contagion as the narrator concurrently alludes to the precautionary mass slaughter enacted during the BSE crisis. If the return to hysteria narratives within feminist theory has largely been prompted by a desire to challenge discourses that speak of feminine subjectivity as lack, *Diary of a Steak* and its speaking meat construct an animal position capable of experiencing trauma, vulnerability and hysteria, yet the text remains aware of the hollowness of this figure. Provocative and disturbing, the hysteric/meat voice deranges the fragilised human through its unruly babble, yet remains an impossibility, denied within a framework that posits the vulnerability of embodied life as integral to the human, but not the animal, condition.

### **Insistent Opacity**

‘Would you like to hear my erotic music?’ (5) The doubled voice of the narrator of *Diary of a Steak*, gesturing towards the duality of the slang term ‘mad cow’ by inhabiting the pathologised positions of BSE-infected meat and female hysteric, seduces through, rather than despite, her perplexing verbal loquaciousness. The production of such an allurements script by which the femme fatale narrator flaunts and conceals her lethal lack positions *Diary of a Steak* as a textural masquerade, performing the tension between surface and depth. As this masquerade speaks to the duplicitous doubles rife across the meat industry, *Diary of a Steak* reveals the contradictions bound up in the ideal of transparency in meat production to instead

suggest that the frustration of this value is integral to the continued desirability of meat. Yet, in drawing out the implicit animality of the femme fatale, *Diary of a Steak* also implies that the propagation of transparency is always layered with its anxiety-ridden reverse: the threat of contagion and usurpation by uncanny siblings and rogue ‘foreign bodies’ that jeopardise the fragile separation of human and animal.

Through its insistent opacity, *Diary of a Steak* frustrates the lure of the diagnostic; not only does it offer a pastiche of the discourse of psychoanalysis and medicine, both structured around the hermeneutics of ‘the case’, but also parodies any possible drive to penetrate, unravel or figure out the text or to ascribe to it an explicit message. Rather, it offers a symptomatic performance of the anxieties that have shaped relations with industrialised meat, and have more broadly served to co-construct femininity, animality and madness as symbolically and materially inter-implicated categories. In so doing, *Diary of a Steak* gestures towards the impossibility of ‘giving voice’, whether to meat or the female hysteric. This approach contrasts dramatically with the subject of Chapter Five, the concept album *One Pig*. While transparency is one of the most contradictory ideals surrounding meat production, *One Pig* ostensibly turns away from critical opacity. Instead, it has been promoted as capable of exposing our relations with the meat industrial complex by offering field recordings of a meat pig bound for the human dinner plate.

## Chapter Five

### The Ethics of the Strain in Matthew Herbert's *One Pig*

While *Diary of a Steak* gestures continually to the absurdity of giving meat a literary voice, Matthew Herbert's experimental concept album *One Pig* has been presented as an aural document of sonic vocality that challenges the assumption that meat and the speaking position are antithetical.<sup>388</sup> Organised into nine tracks, each named after months of the year, *One Pig* follows its titular creature from birth to butcher to dinner plate, interweaving field recordings taken on a Kent farm and music partly composed using instruments made from the body of the slaughtered pig.<sup>389</sup> An example of a growing number of artworks engaging with the animal voice through sound, *One Pig* is notable for specifically documenting the process by which living flesh is turned into dead meat. Herbert has spoken of his project as an attempt to reduce the distance between consumers and processes of meat production, countering the 'waste' of the meat industry through the 'quite magical' transformation of the pig's life into an immersive, sonic experience.<sup>390</sup> In giving a sonic voice to meat, *One Pig* not only challenges the presumed muteness of the livestock animal, but also the prevailing tendency to offer figurations of the slaughter process that operate through a primarily visual register.

*One Pig* has, however, been heavily criticised by the animal advocacy group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) as an attempt to profit from an act

---

<sup>388</sup> See Plumwood, p. 246.

<sup>389</sup> Matthew Herbert, *One Pig* (Accidental Records, 2011).

<sup>390</sup> See Herbert in Matthew Bennett, 'Matthew Herbert's *One Pig*', *Clash Music*, (12 October 2011) <<http://www.clashmusic.com/feature/matthew-herberts-one-pig>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

akin to ventriloquism.<sup>391</sup> *One Pig* therefore raises a number of important questions: on what terms can animals be seen to speak for themselves? What are the implications of controlling or constructing the voice of another? Since the publicity surrounding the album preaches increased respect for the meat pig without challenging its consumption as food, does benevolence become a means of perpetuating what might be thought of as the structural indifference of the abattoir? This chapter argues that by shifting attention from the publicity surrounding the album to the listening experience it demands, one discovers that it is the intermittent unavailability of the pig voice that gives *One Pig* its potency. This chapter explores how the seeming promise of ‘meeting one’s meat’ is frustrated throughout *One Pig*, offering a powerful means of understanding the ambivalent wishes that lie behind the desire to reconnect with the animals bound for the human stomach.

## Meat Voices

Beginning with the rustling of hay, muffled snuffling and squawks of birds interspersed with tubular music, the opening track of *One Pig*, ‘August 2009’, introduces the listener to the farmyard milieu central to the album as well as to the format of the composition: a combination of field recordings, samples and composed music. After the project was announced and its progression tracked on the blog of ‘sample wizard’ Herbert, *One Pig* was released as an album in 2011 and toured as a live performance across the UK and Europe in 2012.<sup>392</sup> *One Pig* stands as the third part of a conceptual trilogy preceded by the albums *One One* (2010) — based around

---

<sup>391</sup> Jobst Eggert and Herbert, ‘Matthew Herbert vs PETA’, *Matthew Herbert*, (3 November 2011) <<http://matthewherbert.com/matthew-herbert-vs-peta/>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>392</sup> This phrase is taken from the title of L. Pattison, ‘Producer Profile: The Sample Wizard’, *Engineering and Technology*, 6:11 (2011), 36–37. Herbert is a musician and producer who has worked under the pseudonyms of Doctor Rockit, Radio Boy and Mr Vertigo since 1995. He was appointed director of the revived BBC Radiophonic Workshop in 2012 and he also worked with Björk on her album *Biophilia* (2011).

samples of Herbert's own body including his voice — and *One Club* (2010) — composed of recordings of the crowd attending a night at the Robert Johnson club in Frankfurt. Taken together, the titles of these albums evidence Herbert's commitment to sonic particularity: the pursuit of the specificity of what he has termed 'that sound' as not 'the sound of any door closing, but [...] the door of number 10 Downing street closing'.<sup>393</sup> However, the titles concurrently gesture towards the possibility of substitutability; *One Pig* is the lifecycle of a particular meat pig, yet could in fact be any pig or indeed all pigs raised through the meat industrial complex.<sup>394</sup>

This sense of interchangeability is only augmented through the live performance of *One Pig*, in which portions of pig meat, evidently not of the body of the original titular figure, are cooked on stage and offered to willing audience members. The dynamic between specificity and the anonymous interchangeability of commercial products builds upon a conceit established by another of Herbert's albums, *Plat du Jour* (2005). Featuring tracks such as 'The Truncated Life of a Modern Industrialised Chicken' (including 'field recordings of 30,000 broiler chickens', 'a dozen organic eggs from Tesco' and '40 free-range chickens in a coop') and 'These Branded Waters' (studio recordings of different bottled waters), *Plat du Jour* offers critical comment on 'overly elaborate and wasteful' networks of food production and consumption.<sup>395</sup> *One Pig* continues in the vein of *Plat du Jour* by focusing attention on

---

<sup>393</sup> Herbert, 'That Sound', *Matthew Herbert*, (9 August 2010) <<http://matthewherbert.com/that-sound/>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>394</sup> As Herbert states, 'a pig is a pig is a pig and a pig will still be a pig in 100 years basically and a pig was basically a pig 100 years ago give or take': see Bennett, 'One Pig'

<sup>395</sup> Herbert, 'Plat du Jour: Reasons for the Record', *Matthew Herbert*, (23 June 2005) <<http://matthewherbert.com/plat-du-jour-reasons-for-the-record/>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

industrial meat production through the creation of an aural document of the lifecycle of the one pig of its title.<sup>396</sup>

Herbert has described *One Pig* as a means of giving meat a voice with the same consciousness-raising intent as *Plat du Jour*.<sup>397</sup> In seeking to cultivate attentiveness to the workings of the contemporary meat industry, *One Pig* can therefore be understood, according to Herbert's framing, as an encounter through which listeners come to ethically 'meet their meat'. This attempt to encourage consumers to 'respect' the meat pig they consume coincides with the aims of a contemporary 'new carnivore' movement. Jovian Parry has described this as a 'loosely connected group of gastronomic texts' that 'strive to present animals' becoming meat as a humane, benevolent and wholly "natural" process'.<sup>398</sup> This intensified call for humans to develop a more informed and accountable relationship with meat production can take the form of knowing the provenance of the meat one eats, turning towards local produce ('locavorism'), contesting the waste of the meat industry through eating less popular or historically 'lowly' meats (also known as nose-to-tail eating) and even killing animals with one's own hands. While Chapter Four suggests that the desirability of meat is predicated on thwarting the transparency of its production methods, as Parry observes, the 'new carnivore' approach seeks to reintegrate the animal into the slaughter process, seeing its visible presence as an incentive rather than a deterrent.<sup>399</sup>

Since the 'new carnivore' movement does not challenge the necessity of meat eating as a practice, the overarching aim is rather to inhabit the benevolent dynamic identified by John Berger: namely, the capacity to care for *and* sacrifice an animal for

---

<sup>396</sup> In keeping with his commitment to specificity, the 'one pig' of the title was purchased for one hundred pounds from a Kent pig farm. Herbert proceeded to gather field recordings over the course of several months until the scheduled slaughter of the animal on 9 February 2010. The pig's body was then consumed as meat and made into various instruments: see Bennett, '*One Pig*'.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

<sup>398</sup> Parry, 'Gender and Slaughter', p. 381.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid., p. 382.



food. Berger argues that this ability has become largely alien to contemporary urban society, writing that:

the vestiges of this dualism remain among those who live intimately with, and depend upon animals. A peasant becomes fond of his pig and is glad to salt away his pork. What is significant, and so difficult for the urban stranger to understand, is that the two statements in that sentence are connected by an *and* and not a *but*.<sup>400</sup>

*One Pig* addresses that which is seen by Berger to be lost on the ‘urban stranger’: the capacity to take pleasure in meat eating — which Herbert parallels with a similar ‘joy and playfulness’ in turning the pig into music — *and* show a respectful engagement with the conditions of animals bred for meat.<sup>401</sup> As this shift in meat consciousness has sought to give an ethical twist to the old industry mantra about using ‘everything but the squeal’ — formerly a caustic reference to the desire to use all parts of the meat pig for profit — Herbert goes further in utilising the voice of the animal as well as its body in the creation of his album.<sup>402</sup> *One Pig* can therefore be seen as an exemplar of the ‘new carnivore’ approach due to Herbert’s attempt to bring listeners into an encounter with the voice of the meat pig as a means of generating an ethical connection with the animals that many eat on a daily basis.

While field recordings of the pig are a key element of the album, Herbert’s particular claim that his record gives voice to the farmyard animal raises the immediate question as to whether these sounds, and indeed the project itself, are strictly akin to sonic vocality. Connor argues that to automatically attribute a voice to a sound

---

<sup>400</sup> John Berger, ‘Why Look at Animals?’, in *About Looking* (London: Bloomsbury, 1980), pp. 3–30 (p. 7).

<sup>401</sup> Herbert in Bennett, ‘*One Pig*’.

<sup>402</sup> See Roger Horowitz, *Putting Meat on the American Table* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 2006), which describes how ‘meatpackers used everything but the oink and the moo from the animals they slaughtered’, p. 82.

emanating from a living body is to assume that it is an intentional property of its source rather than, for instance, ‘accidental discharge’.<sup>403</sup> Connor’s comment speaks to the broader tendency to expel the extra-verbal from the category of the voice. Although sonic vocality is not strictly synonymous with the spoken word, it has often been conceived of as an expression of the mind with intentional, expressive speech as its ideal destination. The belief that the voice is an ‘intimate kernel of subjectivity’ perpetually gesturing towards meaning not only marginalises the extra-verbal, but also contributes to a long-standing tension between the categories of the animal and the voice.<sup>404</sup> Language has been positioned as an exclusively human capacity; the ability to speak has therefore been seen as one of the fundamental qualities that evidence the species border, with the voice deemed ‘the most human of all traits’.<sup>405</sup> Through this logic, also discussed in Chapter Four, animal emanations are akin to noise, babble or, at best, mimicry, exemplified by the equation of ‘parroting’ with mindless imitation.<sup>406</sup> Expelled from language and its vocal conduit, speech, animals can neither lay claim to a voice nor, by extension, are they able to speak for themselves.

Since animality and vocality are conventionally positioned as mutually exclusive, this has long structured the strategies of animal advocacy campaigns. Early-twentieth-century US animal welfare movements sought to act as ‘the voice of the voiceless’. For example, the masthead of one key publication, *Our Dumb Animals*,

---

<sup>403</sup> Connor, ‘Edison’s Teeth: Touching Hearing’, in *Hearing Cultures*, ed. by Erlman, pp. 153–72 (p. 157).

<sup>404</sup> This phrase is used by Mladen Dolar to characterise a view of the voice that he proceeds to criticise in *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2006), p. 14.

<sup>405</sup> Walter J. Ong quoted in Greg Goodale, *Sonic Persuasion: Reading Sound in the Recorded Age* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), p. 95.

<sup>406</sup> Criticising the use of ‘noise’ to demarcate non-musical sounds, Michel Chion explains that the French word *bruit* comes from the Latin verbs *bragere* (to bray) and *rugire* (to roar), inscribing animality into the word’s origins: ‘Let’s Have Done With the Notion of Noise’, *differences*, 22:2/3 (2011), 240–48.

declares that ‘We Speak for Those Who Cannot Speak for Themselves’.<sup>407</sup> In analysing the imagery used in such campaigns, J. Keri Cronin argues that while they tended to assert the precarious position of animals through the trope of voicelessness, visual imagery still imagined a voice, which communicated suffering at the hands of humans as well as unyielding loyalty to these often cruel ‘masters’.<sup>408</sup> This idea that animals cannot speak for themselves continues to inflect the strategies of contemporary advocacy groups, exemplified by the name of the Australian animal protection society, Voiceless. Where an animal voice has been asserted, such as by PETA, it is typically rendered equivalent to a transparent communication of suffering that must be accompanied by a human voice ‘to put into words what they can’t’.<sup>409</sup> According to this framework, the animal voice is either inconceivable or else solely equivalent to a cry; in either instance, it requires the accompaniment of a human voice to be heard.

In contrast to this emphasis on voicelessness as the trope through which to register animal suffering, *One Pig* can be positioned amongst other recent artworks that understand the animal voice as ‘one of the new questioning entities’ in contemporary art.<sup>410</sup> A 2013 edition of *Antennae* on the theme of ‘Bioacoustics’ offers engagements with artists constructing, working with and responding to animal voices in order to show how ‘in human-animal relations sound can be just as epistemologically affirmative as the visual’.<sup>411</sup> In parallel with the contemporaneous rise of sound scholarship that seeks to challenge the primacy of the visual paradigm, artists such as Marcus Coates (*Dawn Chorus*, 2007) and Bill Burns (*Bird Radio*, 2002–11) have

---

<sup>407</sup> J. Keri Cronin, ‘Can’t You Talk? Voice and Visual Culture in Early Animal Welfare Campaigns’, *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 9:3 (2011), 203–23 (pp. 204–205).

<sup>408</sup> Ibid.

<sup>409</sup> Michelle Kretzer, ‘Will An Animal’s Voice Help You Find Yours?’, *PETA*, (4 January 2012) <<http://www.peta.org/blog/will-animal-s-voice-help-find/>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>410</sup> Aloï, *Art and Animals*, p. xv.

<sup>411</sup> Aloï, ‘Editorial: Antennae Issue 27’, *Antennae*, 27 (2013), p. 3. This issue includes Jennifer Parker-Starbuck’s account of the live performance of *One Pig*: ‘Chasing its Tail: Sensorial Circulations of *One Pig*’, 102–13.

worked with animal voices in ways that open up ‘contact zones’ between the human and the non-human that cannot be entirely understood or conceptualised through human-centred models of expression, communication or meaning.<sup>412</sup> Dominic Pettman summarises this reappraisal when he suggests that ‘in all these years, parrots may not have been merely parroting, but prompting and provoking’.<sup>413</sup> Rather than equate animal emanations with mindless or accidental noise, or else solely reducible to cries of suffering and pain, these artists view animal voices as resonating across, and disrupting the terms of, the species border.

*One Pig* registers as one such attempt to generate a contact zone through a sonic encounter between animal and listener. However, the project’s particular focus on the porcine distinguishes it from many other projects on animal vocality. Aloï suggests that birdsong has been seen as the ‘quintessential animal voice’; accordingly, the majority of the articles in the ‘Bioacoustics’ issue focus on artists working in the ornithological realm.<sup>414</sup> Yet, it is arguable that birds are not exemplary of the animal voice; instead, they are an exception in being considered closer to song, tuneful rather than akin to noise. By contrast, *One Pig*’s focus is on the rather more mundane livestock animal. Herbert’s project has been preceded by rather famous literary and cinematic talking pigs including the villainous figures in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* (1945) and the cuddlier Babe, the hero of the 1993 film of the same name based on Dick King-Smith’s children’s novel *The Sheep-Pig* (1983).<sup>415</sup> These texts orientate

---

<sup>412</sup> This notion of ‘contact zones’ is inspired by Broglio, ‘Living Flesh: Animal-Human Surfaces’, *Journal of Visual Culture*, 7:1 (2008), 103–21. For examples of sound scholarship, see Erlman; Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge, MA and London, England: MIT Press, 2001); Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2003), Sterne, ed., *Sound Studies*; and Elizabeth Weed and Ellen Rooney, eds, ‘The Sense of Sound’, *differences*, 22:2/3 (2011), 1–314.

<sup>413</sup> Dominic Pettman, ‘Pavlov’s Podcast: The Acousmatic Voice in the Age of MP3s’, *differences*, 2:3 (2011), 140–67 (p. 160).

<sup>414</sup> Aloï, ‘Editorial’, p. 3.

<sup>415</sup> George Orwell, *Animal Farm: A Fairy Story* (London: Penguin, 2000 [1945]) and Dick King-Smith, *The Sheep-Pig* (London: Penguin, 2010 [1983]).

around acts of prosopopoeia whereby the animal voice is equated with linguistic expression as one imagines words being wielded by animals, albeit in a manner much less tortuous and opaque than in *Diary of a Steak*. Herbert can be distinguished through his attempt to give a sonic voice to the meat pig outside of human language by capturing the process of transforming the livestock animal from living flesh into dead meat.

In seeking to capture this moment of transformation, *One Pig* gets to the very heart of the tension between the categories of the animal and the voice. After all, nowhere has the withholding of voice from animals been more apparent than with regards to meat. It is not merely that animals, once turned into meat, are dead and mute. The very exclusion of animals from the category of the voice justifies their use as a tool for human ends, including the legitimacy of transforming them into consumable flesh. This exclusionary logic is effectively demonstrated in Don LePan's science fiction novel, *Animals* (2009). In a near-future world in which humans are struggling to meet global food demands, children born with disabilities are relegated to the category of 'mongrel'. Initially this is a status akin to a resented pet, yet as food shortages escalate, the children begin to be factory-farmed for meat. Within the novel, the capacity to speak polices the human/mongrel divide as revealed through the story's focus on a young boy, Sam, who is adopted by a family after being abandoned on their doorstep. The mother of Sam's adopted family immediately confers the status of 'mongrel' upon him when she realises that he is unable to speak: 'as soon as its lips moved, she knew it was a mongrel. She heard the gurgle where proper words should be'.<sup>416</sup> Throughout *Animals* the brutal treatment of the 'mongrels' is justified primarily through their gurgling and 'noises', regarded as 'mere parroting [...] where there was

---

<sup>416</sup> Don LePan, *Animals* (Berkeley, CA: Soft Skull, 2010), p. 37.

only sound and no thought'.<sup>417</sup> The novel hints at a different fate for Sam, however, when the daughter, Naomi, realises that he is deaf and privately teaches him to speak. While this 'coming into voice' has often been narratively equated with enhanced social prestige in cultural depictions of deafness, the moment when Sam finally addresses the rest of the family is not the triumph it promises to be.<sup>418</sup> Having already categorised him as less than human, they refuse to hear him, telling Naomi that 'birds and animals are dumb [...] you simply can't get around it'.<sup>419</sup> The denial of a voice to Sam makes his eventual transformation into canned meat in an out-of-town factory farm a narrative inevitability. *Animals* demonstrates how meat is both the fate of, and paradigm for the voiceless, arising from the pre-existing categorisation of animals as vocally mute.

*Animals* implies that Sam's coming into voice should save him from being turned into meat, yet his status as 'mongrel' has already denied him entry into the verbal realm. His address to the family therefore has no consequence upon his fate. By contrast, Herbert argues that the meat voice of *One Pig* can provoke a re-attunement to the workings of the meat industry. Herbert is not the first to have engaged with the notion of the 'meat voice'. Douglas Kahn has criticised understandings of vocality that obscure the degree to which voices emanate from 'below the collarbone'; in other words, they are experienced through the body.<sup>420</sup> Kahn proceeds to analyse the work of three authors, Antonin Artaud, William Burroughs and Michael McClure, as proponents of what he terms the 'meat voice'. Exploring the distinctive ways in which these writers' voices emerge from the bodily topology — Artaud's screams from the spine, Burrough's viral writing and McClure's 'muscular' poetry — Kahn unites their

---

<sup>417</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>418</sup> Lisa Cartwright, *Moral Spectatorship: Technologies of Voice and Affect in Postwar Representations of the Child* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2008).

<sup>419</sup> LePan, p. 71.

<sup>420</sup> Kahn, p. 291.

work under the term ‘meat voice’ as a synonym for the corporeality of vocality.<sup>421</sup>

Kahn positions his term as a challenge to understandings of voice that see it as a conduit of pure, immaterial meaning, yet he not only focuses entirely on literary examples, but also bypasses the exclusion of animals from vocality. His analysis is flooded with bestial metaphors and allusions; McClure’s writing is, for instance, described as ‘mammalian’.<sup>422</sup> However, Kahn never directly addresses a question effectively formulated by Austin McQuinn. Responding to the afterword to Shoshana Felman’s *The Scandal of the Speaking Body* (1980), in which Butler discusses the ‘organic’ or bodily component of the speech act, McQuinn reworks Butler to ask ‘what does the organic dimension of speech do to the claims made in speech when the organic dimension, the organ of speech, is an animal body?’<sup>423</sup> While Kahn’s account of the meat voice can only engage with this question in a metaphorical sense, *One Pig* conversely invites an encounter with an ‘organ of speech’ that is an animal body captured in the process of becoming meat.

### **The Cry of Meat**

Although the animal body is a key ‘organ’ in *One Pig*, the layering of field recordings and human-composed electronica offers a challenging and sonically dense listening experience. The album demands a level of attentiveness; as Jennifer Parker-Starbuck describes, one is listening *for* the pig — the insistent, familiar ‘oinks’ that reassuringly seem to confirm the pig’s living presence as one anticipates its inevitable demise — and listening *with* the pig, deciphering the field recordings and music as allusions to the

---

<sup>421</sup> Ibid.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid.

<sup>423</sup> Austin McQuinn, ‘The Scandal of the Singing Dog’, *Antennae*, 27 (2013), 90–101 (p. 101, n. xvii). See also Butler, ‘Afterword’, in *The Scandal of the Speaking Body: Don Juan with J.L. Austin, or, Seduction in Two Languages*, by Shoshana Felman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1980), pp. 113–24.

animal's physical milieu on the farmyard.<sup>424</sup> While the rural environment has at times been nostalgically envisaged as a pastoral, tranquil scene, in *One Pig* the electronica is particularly powerful when suggesting sudden moments of violence. For example, a *Pitchfork* review of the album aptly describes the second track, 'September', as featuring 'stabs of noise that could be from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* score [...] a slowly molting rhythm, punctuated by horrifying retches from the pig'.<sup>425</sup> Herbert has provided anecdotes in interviews to explain the inspiration behind particular songs, relating 'September' to a notable event in the pig's life whereby its mother had rejected one of its siblings by smashing its jaw against the side of the pigpen.<sup>426</sup> These explanations help to reduce the otherwise enigmatic quality of these acousmatic sounds: that is, recorded sounds without clear origin.<sup>427</sup> Yet even without Herbert's exposition, *One Pig* frequently utilises the potential tactility of sound — its capacity to wield a palpable force as it 'literally moves, shakes and touches us' — to evoke these eruptions of violence.<sup>428</sup>

Since the tracks can only suggest events in the life of the pig without the explanations of Herbert, this means that these intimations of violence tend to continually foreshadow the slaughterhouse as the anticipated fate of the animal. This process of 'listening for' the abattoir is particularly significant given that it is a space that stands as a sensual void in contemporary society. Typically analysis of the slaughterhouse has implicated it in acts of veiling, with the result that attempts to

---

<sup>424</sup> Parker-Starbuck, 'Chasing its Tail', p. 108.

<sup>425</sup> Brandon Soderberg, 'Matthew Herbert: *One Pig*', *Pitchfork*, (14 October 2011) <<http://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/15930-matthew-herbert-one-pig/>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>426</sup> Bennett, 'One Pig'.

<sup>427</sup> Acousmatic music is defined as 'the transformation of recognisable recorded sound samples into new relations, effectively hiding the origin of the raw material so as to focus on an experience of pure sound': Joe Milutis, 'The Biography of the Sample: Notes on the Hidden Contexts of Acousmatic Art', *Leonardo Music Journal*, 18 (2008), 71–75. While terms such as 'hidden' and 'pure' jar with Herbert's discussion of specificity, Milutis's description reflects the intermittent abstraction of *One Pig*, whereby one is never sure of the origin of the sounds or what they index if they do, indeed, index a particular object or being.

<sup>428</sup> Connor, 'Edison's Teeth', p. 157.



challenge its workings have centred on understanding its ‘visual codes’.<sup>429</sup> However, as Herbert discovered when seeking to record the slaughter of the pig for the album, the abattoir is not only veiled, but also silenced. Despite Bennett gaining clearance from the slaughterhouse, an on-site veterinarian refused him permission to attend the slaughter of the pig.<sup>430</sup> Encountering the structural exile of the slaughterhouse as a place withheld from sight and sound, Herbert was forced to imagine the sounds of the abattoir for his project.

Although *One Pig* was shaped by the stringent regulation of public access to abattoirs, the sound of the slaughterhouse has been crucial to a number of literary and artistic attempts to reveal its violence, even if this aspect of sensually engaging with the abattoir has been less studied. One formative example is provided by Sinclair’s novel *The Jungle*. Describing the Chicago meatpacking industry, he frequently focuses on the awesome noise of the whirling industrial machinery that turns flesh into meat, creating ‘too much sound for the room to hold’.<sup>431</sup> In her more recent merger of the travelogue and meat exposé text that is explicitly influenced by Sinclair, Susan Bourette similarly describes a meatpacking plant in which the volume of the machines eclipses those of the animals so that ‘the constant drone of the engine muffles the sound of their collective squeal’.<sup>432</sup> In the realm of the visual arts, Damien Hirst used sound for his installation *This Little Piggy Went to Market* (1996), which displays two halves of a severed pig in glass vitrines, set on a mechanised track that repeatedly dis- and re-members the porcine body in a perpetual back-and-forth motion. With the work visually enacting and repairing the devastating cut that renders living animals into

---

<sup>429</sup> Pick, p. 131. See, for example, Aloï and Chris Hunter, ‘Slaughterhouse: The Task of Blood’, *Antennae*, 5 (2008), 25–29 and Helena Pedersen, ‘Terror from the Stare: Visual Landscapes of Meat Production’, *Antennae*, 14 (2010), 34–39.

<sup>430</sup> See Herbert in Bennett, ‘*One Pig*’.

<sup>431</sup> Sinclair, p. 39.

<sup>432</sup> Susan Bourette, *Meat: A Love Story: My Year in Search of the Perfect Meal* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s, 2008), p. 13.

consumable flesh, Steve Baker stresses that the audible grinding of the piece's central mechanism provides a crucial aural component to the installation.<sup>433</sup> Since commercial nature recordings have been accused of peddling romanticised, quasi-spiritual communions with nature in which human beings are little more than benign listeners, the evocation of the abattoir in *One Pig* positions Herbert's piece as more akin to a 'dark nature recording' that gestures towards the destructive or violent relations between animals and humans.<sup>434</sup>

*One Pig*'s synthesis of pig voice and electronica not only anticipates the 'earconic' sounds of the slaughterhouse, but also parallels the degree to which the process of rendering animals into meat has been understood precisely as the becoming-machinic of living flesh.<sup>435</sup> Plumwood terms meat a 'reduction to an impoverished, mechanistic concept of body': a description that alludes to the meat industry's development of industrial disassembly lines in the mid-nineteenth century as a precursor to Fordian modes of production.<sup>436</sup> Due to the advance of 'convenience meat' throughout the twentieth century, packaged and sold en masse to supermarkets and fast food chains, Roger Horowitz suggests that humans have utilised technologies to secure the 'subduing of animals and their parts to the imperatives of the human race'.<sup>437</sup> For Horowitz, the technical development of the abattoir has been a crucial tool in ensuring the efficient subjection of livestock animals by the meat industry.

---

<sup>433</sup> Baker, p. 85.

<sup>434</sup> David Michael, 'Toward a Dark Nature Recording', *Organised Sound*, 16:3 (2011), 206–10.

<sup>435</sup> An 'earcon' is the 'aural analogue of a visual icon'. While the term technically refers to the computer tones used to indicate user success/failure, it also describes sounds that summon or conjure particular spaces, objects and contexts, regardless of whether they are the source of the sound: Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter, 'Ancient Acoustic Spaces', in *Sound Studies*, ed. by Sterne, pp. 186–96 (p. 187).

<sup>436</sup> Plumwood, p. 244. See also Shukin, p. 88.

<sup>437</sup> Horowitz, p. 152.

Yet, as Jonathan Safran Foer observes, the abattoir does not indicate the dominance of animals by technology, but rather the *convergence* of animal and machine. Discussing the factory farming of hens, he ruminates:

how easy it is to forget the anonymous life all around and simply admire the technological symphony that so precisely regulates this little-world-unto-itself, to see the efficiency and mastery of the machine, and then to understand the birds as extensions of, or cogs in that machine — not beings, but parts. To see it any other way requires effort.<sup>438</sup>

Foer's description of the 'technological symphony' of the abattoir utilises a musical metaphor for what is literalised in Herbert's composition through the merger of pig emanations and composed electronica, some of which was performed using instruments made from the body of the pig.<sup>439</sup> This speaks to one perception of *One Pig* as a reduction of the pig of the title to simply a subjugated part in Herbert's creative process.<sup>440</sup> This accusation by PETA resonates with a broader issue within sound recording by which 'raw sounds' — recordings not yet transformed into compositions — become feminised as passive components to be worked on by the masculinised figure of the producer, technician or musician.<sup>441</sup> Foer suggests that the becoming-machinic of living flesh obscures the bloodier implications of abattoir technologies: so much easier to align animal death with the hardness and supposedly unfeeling metal of the machine than with the soft, sensate flesh of the organic. Herbert could be similarly accused of perpetuating the 'becoming-part-like' function of the

---

<sup>438</sup> Foer, p. 88.

<sup>439</sup> This included using blood for a drum and bones as percussion instruments: see Bennett, 'One Pig'.

<sup>440</sup> See Eggert and Herbert.

<sup>441</sup> Sterne and Tara Rodgers, 'The Poetics of Signal Processing', *difference*, 22:2/3 (2011), 31–53. This impression intermittently permeates Bennett's interview with Herbert: for example, when Herbert describes his frustration at the lack of access to the abattoir as lessening his 'ownership' of the process, or when, as Herbert states that he wanted an organic pig for the project, Bennett asks, 'for better sounds or a better life?' (the answer is 'for a better life').

abattoir through which animal life and death become cogs in the technological apparatus: in the case of *One Pig*, this equipment being that of the music studio rather than the slaughterhouse.

However, as Foer suggests that it requires ‘effort’ to *see* the slaughterhouse differently, *One Pig* utilises the sonic encounter to encourage us to *hear* the workings of the meat industry (albeit necessarily imagined through sound due to the inaccessibility of the abattoir). What is notable across the composition is the degree to which this merger of voice and music evokes the scream. This is most evident in the penultimate track of the album, ‘August 2010’, which features high-pitched modulations of what could be an animal or human voice, the tortured semblance or trace of language shuddering through its rhythmic cry. The uncertainty as to whether this vocoder-like voice is human or animal resonates with scholarly conceptualisations of the cry as one of ‘the most salient inarticulate presymbolic manifestations of voice’.<sup>442</sup> Despite being described as ‘inarticulate’, the scream has been understood as a transparent embodiment of vulnerability and fear: the one vocal emanation that in transmitting pain, resonates across the species border. The transparency attributed to the cry makes an unavoidable demand upon the listener. Connor states that ‘the cry — whether of anger, fear or pain — is the purest form of the compact between the voice and power’.<sup>443</sup> The cry exposes the suffering of the other and, in turn, exposes the listener to its imperative.

The idea that the cry ‘exposes’ suggests a process of opening up, which resonates with the degree to which sound has not only been seen to embody suffering, but also to cause it to the listener through its affective force. This has been particularly influential in psychoanalytic readings of sound and the voice, in particular Anzieu’s

---

<sup>442</sup> Dolar, p. 27.

<sup>443</sup> Connor, *Dumbstruck*, p. 33.

*The Skin Ego*. This text was discussed in Chapter Two for its claim that the psychic topography of the subject demands the formation of ‘second skins’ through which the phantasmatic skin ego can be reinforced. However, Anzieu also suggests that sound is implicated in the formation and disintegration of the skin ego. For Anzieu it is the mother that constitutes the formative sound envelope. While this is ideally a soothing and comforting ‘skin of words’, sounds of pain and suffering can conversely penetrate, expose and disorganise this ‘sonorous envelope’ in ways that destabilise the subject.<sup>444</sup> Scholars have contributed to this idea in explicitly psychoanalytic terms, yet those who veer away from this framing still subscribe to the idea that ‘to be penetrated by sound is to lose one’s sense of unity and to be able to differentiate one’s self from the outside world and from others’.<sup>445</sup> As Anzieu positions the visual observation of the slaughter and butchery of animals as the origin and paradigm for attacks on the skin ego, the cry of flesh becoming meat in *One Pig* gives this an auditory twist.<sup>446</sup> The scream of meat not only conveys the violent unravelling and disintegration of the animal’s body, but also provokes the disorganisation of the listener’s body in the act of hearing this agonising process.

The summation of the affective force of the cry as penetrating and destabilising suggests that *One Pig* can be understood as utilising the register of ‘exposure’ through which other encounters with meatiness have at times operated, albeit here reconfigured as an aural rather than predominantly visual mode. While Chapter One argues that the photographic series *Perishables* visually figures meatiness as an exposure of the vulnerability fundamental to embodied subjecthood, *One Pig*’s sonic evocation of this fragility resonates with an aspect of Butler’s discussion of vulnerability in *Precarious*

---

<sup>444</sup> Anzieu, p. 173.

<sup>445</sup> Goodale, p. 55. For a psychoanalytic approach to the voice, see Kaya Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

<sup>446</sup> Anzieu, p. 42.

*Life* that is strikingly attentive to aurality. Butler focuses particular attention on Emmanuel Levinas's concept of 'the face' as the site through which one encounters the other's vulnerability. This is not, however, the face as a literal or physiological object, but rather a metaphysical concept that constitutes the space through which one is 'exposed' to the other. While his work has been highly influential in contemporary ethics, Levinas has been criticised by a number of critical human/animal studies scholars for his inability to decide whether 'the face' could be extended to animals.<sup>447</sup> For those such as Jacques Derrida, Levinas's uncertainty exemplifies a wider tendency towards 'putting the animal outside of the ethical circuit'.<sup>448</sup> While Butler's consideration of ethics in *Precarious Life* is also structured around a corporeal humanism, her discussion of 'the face' is striking in that she describes it as something that we 'hear', even though it does not strictly 'speak'. Instead, it is 'a kind of sound, the sound of language evacuating its senses, the sonorous substratum of vocalization that precedes and limits the delivery of semantic sense'.<sup>449</sup> What is implicit in this account is the extent to which the interpretation of 'the face' as a vocalisation that is prior to, and constrictive of, 'semantic sense', 'the sound of language evacuating its senses', evokes the cry and its position as an address that powerfully resonates across the human/animal divide. Although the relational ethics of *Precarious Life* remain largely wedded to a humanist framework, Butler's discussion suggests that aurality

---

<sup>447</sup> Calarco deems this Levinas's 'agnosticism' over the question of the animal, stemming from an interview in which Levinas is asked whether his ethics could extend to animals. Levinas replies: 'I can't answer that question': see *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 68.

<sup>448</sup> Derrida, p. 106. For more on this debate, see also Calarco, 'Faced by Animals', *Radicalizing Levinas*, ed. by Atterton and Calarco (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2010), pp. 113–33 and Karalyn Kendall, 'The Face of a Dog: Levinasian Ethics and Human/Dog Co-Evolution, in *Queering the Non/Human*, ed. by Noreen Giffney and Myra J. Hird (Padstow: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), pp. 185–204.

<sup>449</sup> Butler, *Precarious Life*, p. 134.

could be a mode through which to encounter something akin to a ‘creaturely vulnerability’.<sup>450</sup>

Since the scream is a pressing aural demand through which one cannot but encounter the vulnerability of the other, this particular sound is utilised to convey the process of turning flesh into meat in *One Pig*. While PETA has been heavily critical of *One Pig* for ‘speaking for’ animals, Herbert’s album shares PETA’s own tendency to equate the animal voice with the cry as part of their tactics.<sup>451</sup> Although the modulated screams of ‘August 2010’ offer the most potent evidence of the album functioning as a call to conscience, the affective force of the animal cry has been questioned. As Butler observes, ‘a vulnerability must be perceived and recognized in order to come into play and there is no guarantee that this will happen’.<sup>452</sup> The cry is framed as a transparent plea that resonates across the species border, yet there can be a distinct disjuncture between hearing the agony of flesh turning into meat and responding to its call. Sinclair recognises this gulf when describing the sounds of the Chicago stockyards: the ‘high squeals and low squeals, grunts and wails of agony; there would come a momentary lull, and then a fresh outburst, louder than ever’.<sup>453</sup> While these horrifying cries are described as being ‘too much’ for onlookers, provoking hysterical laughter, tightly clenched fists and tears, ‘neither squeals or hog cries [...] made any difference’.<sup>454</sup> In the abattoir, these agonies ‘have no meaning’.<sup>455</sup> The onlookers hear, but do not respond, and the machines grind on, regardless.

Just as Sinclair understands the affective force of animal ‘grunts and wails’, but questions their capacity to provoke a meaningful response in human listeners, so too

---

<sup>450</sup> See Pick.

<sup>451</sup> See Eggert and Herbert. Michael refers to PETA playing recordings of a Chinese fur farm outside the offices of Donna Karan as a protest against their use of rabbit fur, p. 209.

<sup>452</sup> Butler, *Precarious Life*, p. 43.

<sup>453</sup> Sinclair, p. 39.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

does Neville Hoad challenge the extent to which the cry speaks across the human/animal divide in his discussion of H.G. Wells's novel *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896). This novel follows its protagonist Edward Prendrick after he is shipwrecked on a mysterious island inhabited by strange wildmen, overseen by the enigmatic titular figure. Prendrick eventually discovers that Dr Moreau is experimenting on the island's animals in an attempt to turn them into humans, resulting in disturbing hybrid creatures. Hoad and Craig Eley both centralise the voice as crucial to the drama of this discovery as Prendrick overhears the cries of a female puma on Moreau's operating table. While Eley focuses on Moreau's desire to give the animals a voice, to 'make them talk', Hoad concentrates on Prendrick's refusal to recognise the voice of the animal as he instinctively flees, being compelled to return only when the cry transforms into that which he recognises as distinctively human.<sup>456</sup> Hoad's analysis stresses the force of the cry, quoting Prendrick's observation that 'it is when suffering finds a voice and sets our nerves quivering that [...] pity comes troubling us'.<sup>457</sup> Yet, in appraising Prendrick's moment of panicked flight and return, Hoad challenges the assumption that the cry inherently resonates across the species border. Instead, he argues that 'the pain of the alien, the animal, the world in abstract, the clearly not-me can be escaped. The pain of the near-me, the perhaps me, must be attended to'.<sup>458</sup> Like Sinclair before him, Hoad suggests that the animal cry carries affective force, yet it is only the identifiably human voice that demands response.

For Hoad, the absence of response is evidenced by Prendrick's instinctive turning away from the cry, showing an unwillingness to attend to or prevent the

---

<sup>456</sup> Craig Eley, "'Making them Talk': Animals, Sound and Museums", *Antennae*, 22:2/3 (2011), 6–18 (p. 10) and Neville Hoad, 'Cosmetic Surgeries of the Social: Darwin, Freud and Wells and the Limits of Sympathy on *The Island of Dr Moreau*', in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, ed. by Lauren Berlant (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 187–218. See also H. G. Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (London: Penguin, 2005 [1896]).

<sup>457</sup> Hoad, p. 197. See also Wells, p. 38.

<sup>458</sup> Hoad, p. 199.



experience of pain. In *One Pig*, the ending of ‘August 2010’ conveys less a refusal to respond to the animal cry than indifference. By the album’s culmination the modulated cries of the pig have become sounds of consumption, signalling the eating of the animal by humans. The satisfied murmurs indicating the enjoyment of a good meal, knives and forks scraping on dinner plates, seem to evidence a similar lack of response to the animal cry, which is rendered irrelevant in the face of a desire to keep on eating. This penultimate track therefore marks the dissolution of a particular ‘contact zone’ between human and non-human as the pig is no longer encountered aurally, but is instead digested in the stomach of the human consumer. This not only suggests that indifference is integral to the workings of the slaughterhouse, but also underscores a fundamental incommensurability between eating meat and giving voice as the voice of the pig cannot be sustained in the same moment that the carnivorous appetite is satisfied.

### **Porcine Spectrality and the ‘Near-Inaudible’**

The pig’s fate is addressed in the final track of *One Pig*, ‘May 2011’, a short concluding ode. Sparsely orchestrated, the track includes Herbert’s voice, which gently sings that ‘a simple life is all we need | so to rest I put my head| let you occupy my thoughts instead’. The intrusion of the human voice at the end of the album strikes an ambiguous chord. Sound art that avoids utilising human language has been praised for showing human creativity at ‘its most benevolent and least aggrandizing’, using sound as a kind of ‘primal common denominator’ to address the listener as ‘a living denizen of the planet’.<sup>459</sup> By contrast, *One Pig* seems to give the human the final word, thereby acknowledging the ventriloquism at play in the construction of the album. However,

---

<sup>459</sup> Alan Licht, *Sound Art: Beyond Music, Between Categories* (New York: Rizzoli International, 2007), p. 218.

the tremulous melancholic tenor to Herbert's singing voice does register as a concurrent testament to loss. Rather than denote indifference, this elegiac tone returns the listener to the dualism that Berger identified as 'lost' upon the urban stranger: the possibility of mourning and eating the animal as conjoined, rather than antagonistic, processes.

That this dualism is performed specifically through a music album gestures towards a desire central to the historic development of sound recording technologies: namely, 'the possibility of preserving the voice beyond the death of the speaker'.<sup>460</sup> This wish particularly shaped the development of sound technologies designed to aurally capture the natural environment. Such recordings became particularly valued in natural history museums in the 1930s as a means of preserving the sounds of animals and habitats under the threat of extinction.<sup>461</sup> Although hearing the 'embalmed' voices of the dead may no longer be such a novel or disarming experience, *One Pig* is striking in aurally following the pig into death, recording both its first breath in the world and the sound of air being pumped out of its lungs following its demise. *One Pig* therefore provides particularly potent evidence of how 'death appears to result in the paradoxical production of both disappearance and remains': a process integral to the history of sound recording.<sup>462</sup>

In functioning as both disappearance and trace, *One Pig* is an exemplary manifestation of the claim that there is an inherent 'spectrality' to animality in the contemporary moment. In his book *Electric Animal: A Rhetoric of Wildlife* (2000), Akira Mizuta Lippit draws upon a range of philosophers including Agamben and Martin Heidegger to suggest that the emergence of the human subject is dependent

---

<sup>460</sup> Sterne, *Audible Past*, p. 287.

<sup>461</sup> See Eley.

<sup>462</sup> Rebecca Schneider, 'Performance Remains', in *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, ed. by Jones and Adrian Heathfield (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), pp. 137–50 (p. 143).

upon the exclusion of all that is animal. While this already produces a suppression of animality, the ecological threat to various animal species and the growing physical distance between many humans and animals in everyday life mean that animals are metaphysically and literally ‘in a state of perpetual vanishing’.<sup>463</sup> Due to this, Lippit argues that audiovisual technologies have become crucial to attempts to document and forestall the position of animals on the cusp of disappearance. As a result, animals have shifted from being ‘a body to an image; from a living voice to a technical echo’.<sup>464</sup> Shukin has accused Lippit of ‘*buying* the idea’ that ‘spectrality’ is inherent to animality rather than probing into the means by which this relation has been naturalised.<sup>465</sup> This perspective is evidenced by Lippit’s comment that animals have found ‘their proper place’ in audiovisual technologies.<sup>466</sup> However, Lippit’s argument does resonate with Herbert’s description of his album as an encounter with ‘the ghost of the pig’ on the path towards the grave.<sup>467</sup> While this gives the album much of its pathos, as well as its proclaimed ‘magic’, there is a concurrent sense of disavowal. With the pig of the title perpetually suspended in the movement towards death, a transformation able to be rewound and replayed, this obscures the irreversibility of the pig’s fate. The pig is therefore ‘rendered’ into meat in two ways: its body is slaughtered and turned into consumable flesh and instruments, and it is concurrently transformed into the ‘undying currency’ of a commercial sound recording.<sup>468</sup>

Disavowal is furthermore suggested by one of the final lines of the album, ‘a simple life is all we need’. This lyric is the most explicit gesture within the music composition towards the ‘new carnivore’ ethics that call for us to move away from the

---

<sup>463</sup> Lippit, p. 1.

<sup>464</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>465</sup> Shukin, p. 41.

<sup>466</sup> Lippit, p. 25.

<sup>467</sup> Herbert in Bennett, ‘*One Pig*’.

<sup>468</sup> The phrase ‘undying currency’ is drawn from Shukin, p. 39.

modern meat industrial complex without ceasing meat eating altogether. Just as Berger's argument aligns contact with animals with a 'peasant-like' intimacy, so too is this lyric inflected with a sense of nostalgia, perhaps mourning less the life of the substitutable 'one pig' of the title than a lost connection with nature. The idea that *One Pig* can enable the rebuilding of a relationship with one's meat permeates much of the publicity surrounding the album: for example, a *Guardian* review of *One Pig* declares that 'everyone will have a chance to own a piece of the most publicised porker since Babe'.<sup>469</sup> This appeal to ownership as part of the allure of the album suggests that the desire for reconnection with the food one eats does not inherently break with a proprietary relation towards animals; instead, listening to an animal being transformed into meat becomes a novel extension of consuming the pig as food. *One Pig* may not quite offer the fresh encounter with the meat pig that it seems to promise, either in terms of a rejuvenated awareness of meat production processes or a recognition that the titular figure is not always-already meat for the human.

While the disinclination to explicitly challenge the propensity to eat and own meat in the publicity for *One Pig* is discomforting, this focus on the adequacy of the listener response rather deflects attention away from the experience of listening to the album. To focus on response makes a number of presumptions often found in readings of the animal cry, which generally discuss humans hearing a sound of pain and either recognising or not recognising it, which then structures whether one acts in a way seen to be 'ethical'. Approaches that either emphasise a dynamic of recognition and response or conversely proclaim 'ownership' of the pig through buying the album obscure the frequent and repeated unavailability of the meat voice in the experience of

---

<sup>469</sup> Ailbhe Malone, 'Matthew Herbert's Pig Project is a Strange Beast But Not The Only Animal Album on the (Butcher's) Block', *Guardian*, (24 September 2011) <<http://www.theguardian.com/music/2011/sep/24/matthew-herbert-caninus-hatebeak>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

listening. Across *One Pig*, the aural presence of the pig dissipates, waxes and wanes, recurs surprisingly and recedes equally unexpectedly.

As a result, *One Pig* is structured around what Brinkema has termed ‘near-inaudibility’.<sup>470</sup> Rather than understand sonic experience through the dialectic of absence/presence, ‘near-inaudibility’ focuses attention on the varying intensities and pressures that sound produces and enacts. It is crucial to note that ‘near-inaudibility’ is not equivalent to ‘a regime of silence’. Brinkema uses this latter phrase to describe the degree to which sound scholarship tends to privilege silence, which either takes the form of valorising it as a profound negativity that ‘speaks for itself’, paradoxically overflowing with meaning as the transparent sign of the absolute annihilation of being, or fetishising it as an impossibility.<sup>471</sup> Although Herbert’s album would seem an apt vehicle for utilising silence given that it tracks the pig’s movement towards death, it never quite wields this gesture. Herbert has spoken of his desire to begin the album with silence to mark the pig’s birth: a feat that proved to be impossible to achieve through field recordings.<sup>472</sup> While this coincides with the tendency to see ‘pure silence’ as alluringly unachievable, *One Pig* ensures that the meat voice is neither a secure index of presence, nor is its silencing used as a transparent sign of death or absolute absence.

The power of the ‘near-inaudible’ is not just the refusal to participate in a regime of silence. Rather than implicating the listener’s body in plentiful immersion, the ‘near-inaudible’ produces an experience that is frequently frustrated by the straining one must engage in to hear the sounds.<sup>473</sup> In contrast to the presentation of *One Pig* as a means of nostalgically reconnecting with lost nature, it is this strain that is

---

<sup>470</sup> Brinkema, ‘Critique of Silence’, *differences*, 22:2/3 (2011), 211–34 (p. 211).

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

<sup>472</sup> See Bennett, ‘*One Pig*’.

<sup>473</sup> Brinkema, ‘Critique’, p. 227.

crucial to the album. Throughout *One Pig*, it takes effort to hear the pig *apart* from its synthesis — Parker-Starbuck describes ‘hoping it will not be replaced by the technologies’ — and *within* the modulations and rhythms of the music.<sup>474</sup> Perhaps there seems a retch or a grunt, but is this breath, electronic beat or bone? *One Pig* produces an ambiguous engagement with the transformation of a living animal into dead meat, which cannot be reduced to the album’s proclaimed didactic intent. While there remains a tenor of a fetishistic longing to ‘reconnect’ with the pig that one continues to eat, the form of the strain protests against the inevitable linearity of animal death, which is never quite confirmed by the annihilating powers of silence. It is the provocation of this strained, effortful listening that is the most eloquent aspect of *One Pig*’s gesture: its capacity to generate the hope that one might yet catch another whisper of the pig or the tremor of a fleeting murmur.

### **Effortful Straining**

*One Pig* ostensibly invests in the didactic powers of the sonic voice of meat. The album has been presented as a means of generating a respect for the meat pig of the title, a way of reconciling oneself to mourning and eating the animal, rather than separating these two processes into an antagonism. Such publicity participates in an overarching ‘new carnivore’ attempt to forge ethical and accountable relations with animals that do not preclude the possibility of transforming them into meat. However, this approach to the meat pig not only turns it into ‘undying currency’ that disavows the irreversibility of animal slaughter, but also multiplies the proprietary relation with livestock by turning the pig of the title into a site of aural and oral consumption.<sup>475</sup> Yet, to focus entirely on the publicity that surrounds the album obscures the listening

---

<sup>474</sup> Parker-Starbuck, ‘Chasing its Tail’, p. 106.

<sup>475</sup> Shukin, p. 39.

experience demanded by *One Pig*. What is crucial about Herbert's extended composition is that there is an unavailability to the meat voice, which operates less through immersion than through the 'near-inaudible' due to the waxing and waning of these acousmatic sounds. This counters the tendency to equate the sonic with immersion and fullness, suggesting that sound is not only able to touch, move and hit, but also to frustrate. The strain this produces, the effortful listening laden with the desire to still register the aural presence of the pig, refuses the linearity of an album that otherwise naturalises the march towards slaughter and consumption. While the final ode claims that 'a simple life is all we need', *One Pig* offers a strained and difficult 'contact zone' between animal and human, at times receding, at others almost painfully insistent.

*One Pig* is a contemporary engagement with our current modes of meat production and a timely interrogation of the animal voice as a questioning entity. However, the 'new carnivore' approach obscures how our connections with livestock animals are perhaps moving less in the direction of a pastoral return to a 'simple life' than towards the laboratory. The performance piece, *inthewrongplaceness*, the subject of Chapter Six, engages with the development of tissue-cultured meat, a new biotechnology that does not promise a kinder death, but the chance to avoid the necessity of slaughter altogether. While *One Pig* partially attempts to suspend the meat pig perpetually in the movement towards death, *inthewrongplaceness* actively performs the fantasy of necromancy that is enfolded within the development of tissue-cultured meat.

## Chapter Six

### Animating Meat in Kira O'Reilly's *inthewrongplaceness*

While the subject of Chapter Five, *One Pig*, is partly inflected with a nostalgic desire to reconnect with the animals that one eats, Chapter Six responds to the anticipation that the future of meat eating lies less in a return to a pastoral ideal than in a shift towards the laboratory. Publicised as one of the key sites of biotechnological innovation in the mainstream press, 'tissue-cultured' or 'in vitro' meat offers the opportunity to divorce meat production from the abattoir and its industrial mechanisms of animal slaughter by harnessing the growth capacities of stem cells extracted from animals.<sup>476</sup> This promises a radical break from the temporality of industrial meat production, which depends upon a linear transformation of living animal flesh into dead meat. However, as debates about the viability of tissue-cultured meat rest on issues of commercial affordability, taste and authenticity — its capacity to look and feel 'real' to the consumer — this obscures pressing questions about the status of, and relations with, the 'semi-living' beings upon which the development of in vitro meat depends.

At a time when much of the popular press in the UK is focusing on consumer qualms, questions about the agency of tissue-cultured meat are being explored within the realm of bio-art, a loose collective of artistic practitioners working with materials such as living tissues as a means of commenting on and extending biotechnological

---

<sup>476</sup> A number of different names have been proposed for this product, ranging from the implicitly derogative 'schmeat'; the hopeful 'victimless meat'; 'cultured meat'; 'fake meat'; and 'artificial meat'. Although these latter two terms are particularly common, they risk conflation with other 'fake meat' products, such as Quorn. McHugh proposes 'real artificial meat' as a means of capturing the contradictory desire for a product that breaks free of industrial processes of meat production, yet retains a sense of 'real-ness' in taste and texture. I use the terms 'tissue-cultured meat' and 'in vitro meat' since these most clearly capture its mode of production. See also McHugh, 'Real Artificial: Tissue-Cultured Meat, Genetically Modified Farm Animals and Fictions', *Configurations*, 18:1/2 (2010), 181–97 (p. 186).



practice. Blurring the line between the arts and the sciences as in vitro meat disturbs the division between living flesh and dead meat, bio-artists have played pioneering roles in developing tissue-cultured meat, whilst also producing paratexts that question the utopian promise often attached to such biotechnologies. Despite this self-interrogative vein, bio-art discourse often emphasises the vitality of matter in ways that can obscure the complex questions of power and control implicated in the development of tissue-cultured meat. This chapter consequently attends to Kira O'Reilly's bio-art performance *inthewrongplaceness*, in which a naked O'Reilly moves with, over and on a dead sow. While O'Reilly has positioned this as a memory piece reflecting on her experience of using animal parts to grow tissue cultures for her artistic practice, this chapter suggests that *inthewrongplaceness* also comments on the promise attributed to in vitro meat.

This chapter begins by outlining meat's implication in considerations of the animating and animated qualities of matter through a brief analysis of a short film that puts meat in motion, Jan Švankmajer's *Meat Love* (1989). The chapter will then introduce bio-art's engagement with tissue-cultured meat and the issues at stake in such developments. Since biotechnologies 'bring new vitality to coming-alive narratives', this chapter proceeds to position *inthewrongplaceness* as a critical performance of 'animation' that plays on the dual connotations of this term as both the capacity to move and the ability to give life.<sup>477</sup> Part choreography that speaks to the complex relations between biotechnologists and their materials, part spectacle of puppetry and part fantasy of necromancy, *inthewrongplaceness* performs the ambivalent desires that lie behind the belief that in vitro meat offers a clean break from the logics that shape industrialised modes of meat production and consumption.

---

<sup>477</sup> Lois Rosnow Kuznets, *When Toys Come Alive: Narratives of Animation, Metamorphosis and Development* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 181.

## Animating Meat

Although I have previously described Švankmajer's stop-motion animation film *Meat Love* as an entrancing spectacle of carnal romance, it would be more apt to term it a *necromance*.<sup>478</sup> After a suspended knife cuts two slices of steak from a hunk of meat, the pieces spring to life to court and caper over a kitchen work-surface. Waltzing over a chopping board during this bawdy seduction, the steaks consummate their passion in a plate of billowing flour. In keeping with Švankmajer's lauded model of 'total animation' in which all matter is given vitality, this short film puts meat in motion.<sup>479</sup> Animation, indicating both the capacity for movement and the process of giving life to the hitherto inert, is a prime exemplar of the uncanny, provoking unsettling 'doubts as to whether an apparently animate being is really alive, or conversely whether a lifeless object might in fact be animate'.<sup>480</sup> Here, however, the playful antics of *Meat Love*'s courting steaks have an exuberant, even magical air, enchanting in their frolicsome movements.

*Meat Love*'s carnal tryst may be sweet, but it is also brutally short. The jerky motion of the meat and rapid cuts that energise the pace of the film foreshadow its violent end as metal prongs spear the steaks through the middle, thrusting them into a frying pan in a merciless moment of execution. This finale not only resonates tonally with other Švankmajer films in suggesting the destructive or non-preservative qualities of energised materiality, but also serves as a cogent reminder of the violence that is integral to entrancing spectacles of animation.<sup>481</sup> The intrusion of the

---

<sup>478</sup> See Deller, 'Dead Meat', p. 254.

<sup>479</sup> František Dryje, 'The Force of Imagination', in *The Cinema of Jan Švankmajer*, ed. by Peter Hames (London: Wallflower Press, 1995), pp. 143–203 (p. 152).

<sup>480</sup> E. Jentsch in Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. by David McLintock (London: Penguin Books, 2003 [1919]), p. 135.

<sup>481</sup> See Michael Richardson, 'Jan Švankmajer and the Life of Objects', in *Surrealism and Cinema* (New York: Berg, 2006), pp. 121–34 (p. 126) and Paul Flaig, 'Life Driven by Death: Animation Aesthetics and the Comic Uncanny', *Screen*, 54:1 (2013), 1–19.

prongs underscores how the process of bringing something to life attempts to elide, yet cannot fully obscure, the implicit presence of an autonomous agent able to conjure, control and eventually curtail liveliness: one whose own ‘self-generative agency’ wields the capacity, quite literally, to set animation in motion, and correspondingly to bring it to an untimely halt.<sup>482</sup> The ending of *Meat Love* consequently evokes Jackie Stacey and Lucy Suchman’s observation that anxieties surrounding animation are less to do with defining who or what can move as a ‘true’ or ‘natural’ sign of life — the distinction between the inanimate and the animate — than the difference between the *animate* and the *animated*. Distinguishing between these two terms, they understand ‘the former to embody, inherent in their nature, processes of contingent and generative transformation, while the latter require something outside themselves, an external force, to set them in motion’.<sup>483</sup> That the knife and the metal prongs, functioning as both utensils and weapons, give the steaks movement before later extinguishing their liveliness suggests a crucial distinction between that which is seen to move due to its own agency, and that which can only move at the behest of another. It also signals the violence that is enfolded within processes of animation.

It is with a certain irony that other supposedly inanimate objects bring the steaks to life in *Meat Love*. The paradigm of the animate has conventionally been the human, positioned as ‘the prime mover’.<sup>484</sup> Citing a definition from the *Oxford English Dictionary* that stipulates being animate as ‘having the power of movement, like an animal’ (emphasis mine), Stacey and Suchman contend that understandings

---

<sup>482</sup> Jackie Stacey and Lucy Suchman, ‘Animation and Automation — The Liveliness and Labours of Bodies and Machines’, *Body and Society*, 18:1 (2012), 1–46 (p. 16).

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>484</sup> Lynda Birke, Mette Bryld and Nina Lykke, ‘Animal Performances: An Exploration of the Intersections between Feminist Science Studies and Studies of Human/Animal Relationships’, *Feminist Theory*, 5:2 (2004), 167–83 (p. 176).

of animation still typically entrench the human subject as privileged animator.<sup>485</sup> *Meat Love* challenges this assumption by suggesting that all objects — organic, metallic, inanimate, dead — have vitality. The film's attentiveness to the animate quality of seemingly inert matter resonates with debates that have emerged in Science and Technology Studies (STS) and have been continued by the new materialist shifts in recent feminist theory. This diffuse body of thinkers has called for intensified engagement with the body, affect and objects as the 'insistent stuff of a physical reality'.<sup>486</sup> Rather than see matter as only accessible through the prism of human perception, language and meaning, new materialists challenge the notion that objects are simply waiting, inert and immobile, to be animated through human interventions and endeavours. As Karen Barad states, 'matter is not little bits of nature, or a blank slate, surface, or site passively awaiting signification.'<sup>487</sup> By instead understanding matter as dynamic and vibrant, new materialists and STS disrupt understandings of agency that maintain a clear boundary between lively humans and their supposedly inanimate, or less animate, others. *Meat Love* imagines the answer to a ludic question: can the steaks in your kitchen fall in love? However, its playful response coincides with some of the queries being actively posed by theorists working within these new materialist frameworks: for example, Vicki Kirby has explicitly asked whether 'we can entertain the suggestion that meat thinks?'<sup>488</sup> Typically seen as resolutely dead matter, meat emerges as a provocative site through which to question the assumed passivity of thinghood.

While meat is conventionally viewed as lifeless matter, its animating qualities have been positioned as key to its appeal and value. The belief that the consumption

---

<sup>485</sup> Stacey and Suchman, p. 4.

<sup>486</sup> Kirby, 'Initial Conditions', *differences*, 23:3 (2012), 197–205 (p. 200).

<sup>487</sup> Karen Barad, 'Posthumanist Performativity: Towards an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter', *Signs*, 28:3 (2003), 801–31 (p. 821).

<sup>488</sup> Kirby and Wilson, p. 228.

of meat provides the human body with strength, energy and vitality is grounded in physiological explanations that consider the capacity of edible matter, such as proteins, to effect change within the human organism. The belief that red meat made people stronger became prevalent in scientific discourses in the mid-1880s as the German chemist Justus von Liebig produced research arguing that digestion converted meat directly into blood and tissues. This led to the impression that meat was ‘flesh-forming’ as opposed to other foods that could prompt only temporary bursts of heat and energy.<sup>489</sup> While such studies were later debunked, they gave a scientific rationale to the belief that meat eating is crucial to public health and the strength of a nation. The capacity of meat to stimulate the human body over and above other protein-based products is not solely a matter of material capacity, but is over-coded through social beliefs that have led to meat being privileged as a superior animating food. As discussed in other chapters, the vitalising powers of meat have been particularly integral to a metonymic relation between meat and masculinity, by which the consumption of animal flesh invigorates a masculine body characterised by physical power, virility and strength. Within such a schema, meat is a crucial tool in the pursuit of human liveliness; while it is not alive in itself, it serves to invigorate human (in particular masculine) animatedness.

This belief in the vitalising function of meat comes at the expense of the liveliness of animals, which must be disavowed in order to justify the instrumentalisation of animal bodies for human ends. While animals are certainly seen as animate, their liveliness has been viewed as inferior to that of humans. The reluctance to ascribe the same quality of life to animals not only positions them as naturalised subordinates in a vertical hierarchy with humans, but also encouraged a

---

<sup>489</sup> Suzanne Friedberg, *Fresh: A Perishable History* (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 54–55.

concurrent history through which animals were aligned with automata. John Johnston has defined the automaton as ‘a self-moving machine, often a mechanical figure of contrivance meant to convey the illusion of autonomy’.<sup>490</sup> The categorisation of animals as organic beings seems antithetical to this description, due to the presumed ‘unbreachable rift dividing cold, hard, dry machinery [...] from warm, soft, wet living creatures’.<sup>491</sup> Yet, perhaps inspired by the infamous Enlightenment observation by René Descartes that animals are ‘natural automata’ driven by instinct rather than reason, early examples of automata often took the form of animals.<sup>492</sup> As Jessica Riskin notes, this convergence of animal and machine through the merger of mechanical and organic body parts wrestled with two contradictory beliefs: on the one hand, that ‘animal life is essentially mechanistic’, and, on the other, that ‘the essence of animal life is irreducible to mechanism’.<sup>493</sup> This implicates the animal in a liminal space between possessing animation as a ‘natural’ sign of life and being a fleshy automaton that simulates, but cannot fully embody, the superior liveliness attributed to humans over and above non-human others. It is precisely this tension that must be disavowed through industrialised slaughter, which is legitimised through an imagined distinction between the autonomously alive (humans) and those who can be instrumentalised when viewed as closer to mechanised or automated flesh (animals). As a result, to question the liveliness of the meat that humans eat can undermine some of the assumptions upon which prevailing relations with meat production are based.

---

<sup>490</sup> John Johnston, *The Allure of Machinic Life: Cybernetics, Artificial Life, and the New AI* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2008), p. 29.

<sup>491</sup> Jessica Riskin, ‘Eighteenth-Century Wetware’, *Representations*, 82 (2003), 97–125 (p. 115).

<sup>492</sup> See René Descartes, ‘Animals are Machines’ in *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*, ed. by Susan Armstrong and Richard Botzler (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), pp. 281–84 (p. 284).

<sup>493</sup> Riskin, ‘The Defecating Duck, or, The Ambiguous Origins of Artificial Life’, *Critical Enquiry*, 20:4 (2003), 599–633 (p. 612).

## Bio-Art Encounters and Aesthetics of Liveliness

Specific questions regarding the capacity of meat to fall in love or think may appear speculative provocations. Yet, ruminations on the agentic qualities of meat have become increasingly relevant following recent media reports on the future possibility of manufacturing tissue-cultured meat commercially. Since the early twentieth century, meat production has been shaped by endeavours in the field of ‘meat science’.<sup>494</sup> While this indicates that the laboratory has long been crucial to the production of commercial meat, one of the prime media faces of biotechnological innovation is the anticipated capacity to produce tissue-cultured meat using stem cells taken from animals. Hailed as the impending future of food to the extent that the term ‘schmeat’ was a contender for the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s ‘Word of the Year’ in 2013, the first in vitro burger was unveiled by Dr Mark Post on 5 August 2013.<sup>495</sup> Not only is tissue-cultured meat heralded for its environmental benefits, but also for its ability to dramatically reduce the quantity of animals killed through the global meat industry. That PETA publicly offered one million dollars to the first person able to commercially produce tissue-cultured meat demonstrates its

---

<sup>494</sup> Meat science emerged as a field of study in the early twentieth century as scientists began to work in tandem with the meat industry to explore factors affecting the production, quality, health, manufacture and processing of commercial meat. Since the opening of the first meat laboratory in the USA in 1900, the field has undergone significant shifts: see Robert W. Bray, ‘History of Meat Science’, *American Meat Science Association*, (1997) <<http://www.meatscience.org/about-amsa/history-mission/history-of-meat-science>> [accessed 26 June 2015] and William Boyd, ‘Making Meat: Science, Technology and American Poultry Production’, in *Environmental History and the American South*, ed. by Paul S. Sutter and Christophe J. Maysalle (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2009), pp. 311–44.

<sup>495</sup> ‘See ‘Oxford English Dictionaries Word of the Year 2013’, *Oxford Dictionaries*, (19 November 2013) <<http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/press-releases/oxford-dictionaries-word-of-the-year-2013/>>. See also ‘Hamburger Junction’, *Economist*, (25 February 2012) <<http://www.economist.com/node/21548147>> and Sample, ‘£200,000 Test-Tube Burger Marks Milestone in Future Meat-Eating’, *Guardian*, (19 February 2012) <<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2012/feb/19/test-tube-burger-meat-eating>> [all accessed 26 June 2015].

widespread promotion as a way out of the ethical quandary presented by the dependence of meat eating upon animal slaughter.<sup>496</sup>

As media reports stress in vitro meat as a ‘disruptive technology’ that not only challenges the dependence of meat on animal death, but also the preferences of human taste-buds, ethical questions posed by the biotechnological instrumentalisation of life remain obscured.<sup>497</sup> While tissue-cultured meat would lower current levels of animal slaughter, McHugh argues that its promotion often minimises the extent to which animal bodies are still required for its production processes. Moreover, reports have failed to consider the liveliness of tissue-cultured meat itself. Given that the production of in vitro meat is largely dependent upon the growth capacities of stem cells harvested from animals, McHugh argues that the agency of tissue-cultured meat is ‘dangerously undertheorized’ within the popular media.<sup>498</sup> For McHugh, in vitro meat should rather be understood to pose a not dissimilar question to that entertained within the frames of *Meat Love* — how lively is your (future) meat?

Turning away from the press as the space within which to explore this question, McHugh observes that a deeper engagement with the lively issues at stake in the development of in vitro meat is being forged in the field of literature, most notably in Margaret Atwood’s ‘MaddAddam Trilogy’ (2003–13), and by a loose conglomeration of artists, writers and media groups working in the realm of bio-

---

<sup>496</sup> ‘PETA’s “In Vitro” Chicken Contest’, *PETA*, (2014) <<http://www.peta.org/features/vitro-meat-contest/>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>497</sup> See, for example, Steve Connor, ‘Special Report: “In Vitro” Beef — It’s the Meat of the Future’, *Independent*, (28 July 2013) <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/special-report-in-vitro-beef--its-the-meat-of-the-future-8735104.html>> and Michael Hanlon, ‘Fake Meat: Is Science Fiction on the Verge of Becoming Fact?’, *Guardian*, (22 June 2012) <<http://www.theguardian.com/science/2012/jun/22/fake-meat-scientific-breakthroughs-research>> [both accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>498</sup> McHugh, ‘Real Artificial’, p. 181.



art.<sup>499</sup> Bio-art emerged in the late 1990s as a collective of artistic practitioners working with, utilising and commenting upon living media, including tissue cultures, bacterial cells and DNA. Associated with notable figures such as Oron Catts, Eduardo Kac, Adam Zaretsky and Ionat Zurr, bio-art is perceived to occupy a ‘breach’ moment in the traditional division between the arts and the sciences, although the credibility of its endeavours is often asserted through stressing the scientific validity of its practice.<sup>500</sup> While bio-art is at times spoken of as a homogenous mass, practitioners can be distinguished between those who directly stage biotechnological experiments in front of audiences and others who occupy a more ‘performative’ strand, as their work instead indexes or alludes to processes enacted outside of the artistic space. In keeping with other forms of live art, bio-art offers a complex construction of ‘liveness’ through its simultaneous reliance upon the ephemerality of performances often staged in front of small audiences, and the concurrent production and dissemination of photographic documentation and other paratexts through which the artists depict and comment upon their work.<sup>501</sup> Through this, bio-artists’ engagement with living forms positions them as biotechnological practitioners *and* critics.

Nowhere is this dual role as pioneer and appraiser more apparent than in bio-art’s innovative role in the development of in vitro meat. Recent media reports tend to present the production of tissue-cultured meat as a competitive race between

---

<sup>499</sup> Ibid., and McHugh, ‘Clever Pigs, Failing Piggeries’, *Antennae*, 12 (2010), 19–25. Margaret Atwood’s trilogy is formed of the novels *Oryx and Crake* (London: Virago, 2003), *The Year of the Flood* (London: Virago, 2009) and *MaddAddam* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013).

<sup>500</sup> Deborah P. Dixon, ‘The Blade and the Claw: Science, Art and the Creation of the Lab-Born Monster’, *Social and Cultural Geography*, 9:6 (2008), 671–92.

<sup>501</sup> For more on this issue, see Tagny Duff, ‘Going Viral: Live Performance and Documentation in the Scientific Imaginary’, *Performance Research*, 14:4 (2009), 36–44.

scientists working at opposing European research institutes.<sup>502</sup> However, it was The Tissue Culture and Art Project (TC&A), the artistic partnership of Catts and Zurr initiated in 1996, which first produced tissue-cultured meat in a form that could be consumed by the public.<sup>503</sup> As part of their broader ‘Victimless Utopia Series’ that ironises the tendency to report biotechnologies as offering guilt-free solutions to contemporary social issues, Catts and Zurr presented in vitro meat to the public as *Disembodied Cuisine* (2003). For this, they initially developed tissue-cultured steak from frog skeletal muscle at Harvard Medical School in 2000. After gaining permission to serve the steak as food, they displayed it in the *L’Art Biotech* exhibition held at the National Arts and Culture Centre, Le lieu unique, in Nantes, France, offering tissue-cultured steak on plates at a dinner table, to be touched and eaten by audience members surrounded by live frogs placed in an indoor pond.

The refusal to abstract the production of in vitro meat from its origins in living animals was extended into the subsequent performance, *The DIY De-Victimizers* (2006), created in collaboration with SymbioticA and Dr Stuart Hodgetts (University of Western Australia).<sup>504</sup> This presented ‘The DIY De-Victimizer Kit’: a basic tissue culture facility that was used to experiment with bringing pieces of meat back to life by maintaining the vitality of the cells. The performance gave audiences responsibility over the care of these fragments of flesh, deciding which to ‘de-victimize’ and ‘re-life’, and which to keep in the ‘culturally accepted position of

---

<sup>502</sup> John Vidal, ‘Race to Serve Up Artificial Chicken For a \$1m Prize’, *Guardian*, (21 January 2012) <<http://www.theguardian.com/science/2012/jan/21/artificial-chicken-food-prize>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>503</sup> Guy Ben-Ary was also a member of the Tissue Culture and Art Project between 1999 and 2003.

<sup>504</sup> SymbioticA is an artistic research laboratory at the University of Western Australia that was founded in 2000 by Catts, cell biologist Professor Miranda Grounds and neuroscientist Professor Stuart Bunt as a means for artists and others outside the traditional scientific community to engage in biotechnological practice and critique: see SymbioticA, ‘SymbioticA: About Us’, *SymbioticA: The University of Western Australia*, (2015) <<http://www.symbiotica.uwa.edu.au/home/about>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

dead meat'.<sup>505</sup> *The DIY De-Victimizers* brings into play the guilt that can be otherwise disavowed in ascribing certain animals to the position of livestock, and also highlights the 'uneasy and problematic vitality' of the 'semi-living' beings currently hidden from view in media reports on 'victimless meat'.<sup>506</sup>

The 'Victimless Utopia Series' positions the tactile as a key site of epistemological revelation, stressing not only the need to look one's subject 'in the eye', but also to cradle it in one's own hands.<sup>507</sup> This coincides with bio-art's general 'explicit, visceral aesthetic'.<sup>508</sup> Associated with other suggestively tactile terms such as 'wet media', 'moist media art' and 'wetwork', bio-art tends to valorise touch and hands-on experience as conduits for ethical reflection.<sup>509</sup> This attribution of ethical weight to the tactile evokes Donna Haraway's *When Species Meet* (2008), in which she argues that 'touch ramifies and shapes accountability'.<sup>510</sup> For Haraway, the formation of 'contact zones' and 'attachment sites' creates cross-species spaces of recognition that demand some form of response from participants. Catts and Zurr enfold 'accountability' into their tactile encounters through the repeated use of the 'Killing Ritual', ensuring that all performances end with the death of the tissue cultures on display.<sup>511</sup> Stress upon revelation and responsibility as integral to touching is nonetheless accompanied by an emphasis upon vitality and energy; bio-

---

<sup>505</sup> Catts and Zurr, 'Disembodied Livestock', p. 110.

<sup>506</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>507</sup> Catts and Gary Cass, 'Labs Shut Open: A Biotech Hands-On Workshop for Artists', in *Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism and Technoscience*, ed. by Beatriz da Costa and Kavita Philip (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), pp. 125–42 (p. 126).

<sup>508</sup> Dixon, p. 674.

<sup>509</sup> See, respectively, Monika Bakke, 'Zoe-Philic: Wet Media Art and Beyond', *Parallax*, 14:3 (2008), 21–34; Jens Hauser, 'Biotechnology as Mediality: Strategies of Organic Media Art', *Performance Research*, 11:4 (2006), 129–36; and Hauser, 'Observations on an Art of Growing Interest: Toward a Phenomenological Approach to Art Involving Biotechnology', in *Tactical Biopolitics*, ed. by da Costa and Philip, pp. 83–104.

<sup>510</sup> Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 36.

<sup>511</sup> The death of the tissue cultures occurs either through eating them or holding them, as the bacteria on human hands tends to destroy the cells: see Zurr and Catts, 'Are the Semi-Living Semi-Good or Semi-Evil?', *Technoetic Arts*, 1:1 (2003), 47–60.

art discourse is flooded with references to entangling with ‘living media’, ‘wet’ materials and ‘excitable tissues’.<sup>512</sup> Bio-art maintains a self-critical edge by frequently asking: ‘by what criteria do we ascertain whether something appears to be alive?’<sup>513</sup> However, its discursive focus upon the liveliness of its materials does not always offer the interrogation of killing and death shown in performances like *The DIY De-Victimizers*. Given that animation gains its enchanting power precisely through its proximity to mortality, this raises important questions as to what is obscured when bio-art emphasises liveliness as the foundation of its aesthetics.

### **Necromantic Choreography**

A key work that critically probes the relation between bio-art and its aesthetics of liveliness through meat is O’Reilly’s performance, *inthewrongplaceness*. O’Reilly is a live art practitioner whose performances have particularly focused on her own skin as the site through which to reference and interrogate medical practices, such as the use of leeches in *Bad Humours/Affected* (1998) and wet cupping in *Wet Cup* (2000). *inthewrongplaceness* was originally commissioned by HOME, London in 2005, and was subsequently performed in such locations as Newlyn Art Gallery (2006) and Casino Luxembourg (2009). *inthewrongplaceness* offers a *danse macabre* with the forty-eight kilogram cadaver of a sow taken from an abattoir. In this performance, a naked O’Reilly moves (with), poses, dances and embraces the pig’s body. Over the course of four to six hours, audience members can individually engage with the performance for ten minutes at a time, touching O’Reilly and the pig as they

---

<sup>512</sup> Natasha Myers and Joe Dunit, ‘Haptic Creativity and the Mid-Embodiments of Experimental Life’, in *A Companion to the Anthropology of the Body and Embodiment*, ed. by Frances E. Mascia-Lees (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 239–61 (p. 239).

<sup>513</sup> Richard Brown, *Biotica: Art, Emergence and Artificial Life* (London: RCA Research, 2001), p. 191.

choose.<sup>514</sup> Dancing and moving the bodies of dead or stuffed animals has been central to a number of past and contemporary live art performances; one can cite, for instance, Joseph Beuys's *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965), or Franko B's recent work *Because of Love* (2012–14), in which he engages with an animatronic polar bear. O'Reilly has explicitly positioned *inthewrongplaceness* as a response to her experiences at SymbioticA between 2003 and 2004. There, her aim to make 'living lace' cultured from her own skin for the project 'Marsyas: Running Out of Skin' required her to practise with cells taken from dead pigs. Although O'Reilly did not complete this project, *inthewrongplaceness* became one outcome: a performance reflecting on the potentially compromising materials involved in bio-art practice. In specifically manifesting this encounter through movement, O'Reilly critically probes her engagement in processes of biotechnological animation that utilise dead animal bodies to produce ambiguously lively beings.

---

<sup>514</sup> An exception was a performance in Mexico in which three people were invited to enter the space at a time: see Kira O'Reilly in Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 'Falling Asleep with a Pig', *Antennae*, 13 (2010), 38–48 (p. 39).



**Figure 11**

*inthewrongplaceness* (2004–09). Collaboration #5, London (2005)

Photograph: Kira O'Reilly and Manuel Vason

In keeping with bio-art's investment in the potency of the tactile encounter, *inthewrongplaceness* offers a triad of possible contact between individual audience members, O'Reilly and the pig. In contrast to exhibits like *Disembodied Cuisine* in which tissue cultures are directly placed on display, *inthewrongplaceness* is more

akin to a memory piece laden with residues of the laboratory. Modes of scientific touch structure the corporeal interactions between performer and audience members: for example, vinyl gloves were provided to all participants, and each person was sprayed with disinfectant prior to entering the scene. While these elements reference the scrupulous cleanliness attributed to the laboratory, there is a concurrent suggestion of a simultaneous desire to protect one's skin. This wish to keep the encounter hygienically 'pure' not only gestures towards anxieties surrounding contagion that haunt impressions of scientific endeavour, but also provides an implicit gloss upon the distancing mechanisms through which one approaches meat and, at times, animals more broadly. Benjamin summarises this when he states of an aversion to animals that:

All disgust is originally disgust at touching. Even when the feeling is mastered, it is only by a drastic gesture that overleaps its mark: the nauseating is violently engulfed, eaten, while the zone of finest epidermal contact remains taboo.<sup>515</sup>

Here Benjamin posits an antagonistic relation between the human and the animal; the human subject is disturbed by, and consequently seeks to disavow or 'master' the bestial qualities that are shared with animals. This is primarily performed through 'violent engulfment'; 'eating' the relation is a necessarily 'drastic gesture' that is borne of anxiety, but seeks mastery. However, as this action 'overleaps its mark', it is 'the zone of finest epidermal contact' that remains taboo. While the intimacy between the bodies of O'Reilly and the pig provides a riposte to this overtly fraught relation between animals and humans, the concurrent provision of gloves and disinfectant gestures towards discomfort at certain forms of proximity with raw meat.

---

<sup>515</sup> Benjamin, p. 448.

*inthewrongplaceness* therefore gains frisson in inviting audience members to sit in a relation of ‘finest epidermal contact’ that is often rendered abstract for those who eat meat.

As laboratory practice permeates the ambivalent modes of touch made possible in the artistic space, this opens up a temporal fold: a pocket of reminiscence whereby the audience is given the means of recognising and entering into direct contact with the materials that O’Reilly encountered in her biotechnological practice. Jens Hauser argues that ‘the observer of *bio-art* must shift between the symbolic artistic space and the “real life” of the presented processes suggested by the organic presence’.<sup>516</sup> In *inthewrongplaceness*, this oscillation can only allude to the pig body as a potential material for biotechnological practice. However, in Figure 11, staged after the 2005 performance, O’Reilly’s cradling of the sow suggests an overarching tone of mourning as funereal lilies, jarred embryos and stuffed animals surround her.<sup>517</sup> In a manner similar to *One Pig*, this elegiac tenor not only challenges contemporary relations with meat, but also with laboratory animals: both often orientated around the capacity to forget the origins of packaged meat or the experimental subjects upon which human medical developments depend, to specifically *not mourn*.<sup>518</sup>

While Figure 11 counters the position of meat as ‘the very flesh of forgetting’, *inthewrongplaceness* is not simply a tableau of grief.<sup>519</sup> Instead, the performance is forged through movement as O’Reilly undertakes a lament-like dance with the pig body. Given that *inthewrongplaceness* is permeated with the symbolic residues of biotechnological practice, the suggestion of a phantasmatic, necromantic

---

<sup>516</sup> Hauser, ‘Biotechnology as Mediality’, p. 132.

<sup>517</sup> Thank you to Kira O’Reilly for providing information on the staging of the photographs.

<sup>518</sup> Michael Carolan, *Embodied Food Politics* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 41.

<sup>519</sup> Foer, p. 37.



resurrection through these movements partially evokes the hubristic intentions at times attributed to scientific research — the desire to wield absolute control over life — whilst also coinciding with the interplay of mourning and guilt brought into play through the ‘re-lifeing’ experiments of *The DIY De-Victimizers*. However, as O’Reilly’s languid movements are more akin to a dance, this converges with emergent discourses regarding everyday experimental practices of biotechnological research. Particularly inspired by Barad’s ‘quantum materialism’, a number of terms including ‘co-presence’, ‘intra-action’ and ‘entanglement’ are used to describe the relations forged between biotechnologists and their research materials.<sup>520</sup> What these terms evoke is that material relations are not enacted through collisions between previously distinct, atomised entities (as suggested by the term ‘interaction’), but rather these activities occur *within* dynamic phenomena that are always-already multiple.

‘Choreography’ has emerged as one notable trope through which to speak to the interplay between researchers and their experimental subjects.<sup>521</sup> While choreography is often understood to imply a seamless, learned sequence of moves, Erin Manning argues, referencing William Forsythe, that it is often the secondary result of movement, a retrospective attribution of pre-knowledge onto fluid, unanticipated flows of bodily deformation and recomposition.<sup>522</sup> The implication that choreography is caught up in a merger of the pre-determined and the open renders it ‘a viable metaphor to capture the improvisational play as bodies (humans,

---

<sup>520</sup> See Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2007).

<sup>521</sup> See Birke, Bryld and Lykke who describe ‘the complexity of human/animal interrelating as a kind of choreography’, p. 167. See also Natasha Myers, ‘Dance Your PhD: Embodied Animations, Body Experiments and the Affective Entanglements of Life Science Research’, *Body and Society*, 18:1 (2012), 151–89.

<sup>522</sup> Erin Manning, *Relationscapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2009), p. 14.

nonhumans and machines) and meanings get made inside experiments'.<sup>523</sup> As O'Reilly dances with one of her materials, the encounter between her body and that of the pig does not simply enact a necromantic phantasy, but also the everyday choreography of experimentation central to recent accounts of biotechnological practice.

### Disquieting Intimacies



**Figure 12**

*inthewrongplaceness* (2004–09).

*sk-interfaces : Exploding Borders — Creating Membranes in Art,*

*Technology and Society*, Casino Luxembourg (2009)

Photograph: Axel Heise

---

<sup>523</sup> Myers and Dunit, p. 244.

Although *inthewrongplaceness* is forged through choreography, its documentation is reliant on photographs of O'Reilly's poses staged after her live performances. Evoking the aforementioned tension between the ephemerality of bio-art and its construction through circulated paratexts, such photographs seem to nullify the animating qualities so central to *inthewrongplaceness*. What Figure 12 instead nods towards is mimesis, which Suchman has argued is 'a guiding trope for figuring human-nonhuman encounters'.<sup>524</sup> Understanding 'mimesis' as 'a form of relation that privileges vision, and looks to find in the Other a differently embodied reproduction of the Self', Suchman's description captures the mirroring of human and pig body in Figure 12, which focuses on the equivalences of skin.<sup>525</sup> Although Suchman suggests that mimesis typically 'privileges vision', Figure 12 specifically invokes a haptic visuality as it forces the viewer 'to move over the surface of its object rather than plunge into illusionistic depth, not to distinguish form so much as to discern texture'.<sup>526</sup> Gianna Bouchard describes how this movement of the eye over the surface highlights all manner of similarities between these two skins: 'colour, texture, suppleness, folds and creases'.<sup>527</sup> With Figure 12 inspiring the look that Marks attributes to haptic vision — one 'so intensely involved with the figure of the other that it cannot take the step back to discern difference' — these skins slip into one another.<sup>528</sup> This creates a textural challenge to the staunchness of the species border, suggesting cross-species mutability played out on the surface of the skin. The skins, resting against and visibly dissolving into one another, position the bodily

---

<sup>524</sup> Suchman, 'Subject Objects', *Feminist Theory*, 12:2 (2011), 119–45 (p. 121).

<sup>525</sup> Ibid.

<sup>526</sup> Marks, p. 162.

<sup>527</sup> Gianna Bouchard, 'Skin Deep: Female Flesh in UK Live Art Since 1999', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 22:1 (2012), 94–105 (p. 102).

<sup>528</sup> Marks, p. 191.

surfaces of *inthewrongplaceness* as prime sites of animation: spaces of ontological blurring that speak to the dynamic entanglements of biotechnological practice.

That pig and human skins inhabit this ontological disruption is particularly provocative given that the human/swine relationship has been figured as a potent site of metamorphosis. Visual and literary texts including Cindy Sherman's *Pig Woman* photographs (1986) and novels such as Darrieussecq's *Truismes* and Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* (1992) play upon the mutability of pig and human bodies, often exploring the association between the porcine, dirt and abjection. O'Reilly has openly acknowledged *Truismes'* woman/sow merger, also discussed in Chapter Three, as a key inspiration for *inthewrongplaceness*.<sup>529</sup> However, kinship between pigs and humans is increasingly imbued with a sense of possibility in the field of scientific enquiry as human/swine couplings indicate 'compatible, albeit unusual companion species' that herald 'distant albeit promising future affinities'.<sup>530</sup> While they have therefore emerged as important 'threshold creatures' imbued with biotechnological potential, the proximity of pig and human still carries connotations of monstrosity that undermine the outright embrace of these potential 'companion species' as intimate kin.<sup>531</sup> Figure 12 carries an unsettling tenor in disrupting the boundary between the human and the porcine, between living flesh and corpse. As Sarah Marie Woods Bezan argues, 'the relative indistinguishability of animal and human flesh scratches the surface of our discomfiture: for to have flesh like an animal is, not surprisingly, to be an animal and, more importantly, to be reminded

---

<sup>529</sup> O'Reilly in Snaebjörnsdóttir/Wilson, p. 46.

<sup>530</sup> Lesley Sharp, 'Hybrid Bodies of the Scientific Imaginary', in *Anthropology of the Body and Embodiment*, ed. by Mascia-Lees, pp. 262–75 (p. 265).

<sup>531</sup> The term 'threshold creatures' is drawn from McHugh, 'Clever Pigs', p. 19, while the phrase 'companion species' is used throughout Haraway, *When Species Meet*. For more on pig-human relations, including brief discussion of *inthewrongplaceness*, see Parker-Starbuck, 'Pig Bodies and Vegetative States: Diagnosing the Symptoms of a Culture of Excess', *Women and Performance*, 18:2 (2008), 133–51. See also the themed journal issue: Aloï, ed., 'Pig', *Antennae*, 12 (2010), 1–97.

that we are animals'.<sup>532</sup> Figure 12 has a disturbing quality, shaking the imagined stability of the human as it inhabits a disquieting, mimetic intimacy with dead meat.

Woods Bezan's emphasis upon 'discomfiture' as one response to cross-species merger is suggestive. Barker observes that 'discomfiture' — the root, *conficere*, meaning 'put together' — can connote both a drawing close and a pulling apart.<sup>533</sup> Figure 12 provokes the initial uncertainty that is characteristic of haptic visuality: the hesitation that ensures that it is 'some time before the viewer realises what he or she is beholding'.<sup>534</sup> Yet, there is a palpable textural distinction between these skins. While the skin on the left carries traces of injury through the faint, small scars etched across it, the skin on the right has a plasticity to its surface: its veins ghostly visible due to the melting of hair from the body, its shininess puckering and bunching in contrast to the suppleness of the skin shown on the left. It is the plasticity of the pig skin that implicates its objecthood as 'the pliancy of an object suggests its heightened vulnerability to external manipulation'.<sup>535</sup> The visible plasticity of the skin on the right communicates a malleability that challenges the impression that the pig and O'Reilly are solely to be seen as 'twins', mirrors of one another, equivalents. Instead, Figure 12, animating these uncannily similar bodily surfaces whilst introducing a differential texture of plasticity, suggests a dynamic of control. Although Barthes deems the malleability of plastic to render it 'less a thing than the trace of movement' in its infinite capacity for transformation, he also describes it as occupying the position of the 'shaped' or the 'formed'.<sup>536</sup>

Correspondingly, the pliancy of the pig skin points to the fact that it is O'Reilly who

---

<sup>532</sup> Sarah Marie Woods Bezan, 'From the Mortician's Scalpel to the Butcher's Knife: Towards an Animal Thanatology', *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 10:1 (2012), 119–37 (p. 126).

<sup>533</sup> Barker, p. 7.

<sup>534</sup> Marks, p. 163.

<sup>535</sup> Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 117.

<sup>536</sup> Barthes, p. 117. See also Manning who describes the elasticity of movement as 'pure plastic rhythm', p. 35.

generates the animating pulse of the performance; it is she who is the ‘shaper’.

Figure 12 thereby multiplies and questions the possible affiliations that can be imagined between O’Reilly and the pig: no longer simply double, but puppet, doll, intimate and stranger.<sup>537</sup>

### **‘Boomeranged’ Animation**

The textural plasticity of the pig skin, contrasting with the suppleness of O’Reilly’s back, underscores *inthewrongplaceness* as a performance of animation: animation less in the bio-art sense of ‘a document of pure activity’ than as the process of enlivening the inanimate. This ‘puppeteering’ — a term Sianne Ngai defines as ‘the thinging of the body in order to construct it as impassioned’ — creates a vision of pliancy and exaggerated corporeality.<sup>538</sup> The doll-like nature of the pig suggests a dynamic of ‘toying with’, a process described by Susan Stewart as multiple in its registers; to toy with is ‘to dally with and caress, to compose a fantastic tale, to play a trick or satisfy a whim, to manipulate, and to take fright at’.<sup>539</sup> Stewart’s inclusion of the ‘caress’ in her definition allows for the sensitive slowness of O’Reilly’s movements; the artist has described the performance as founded on ‘tender and soft actions of embrace and thoughtfulness’.<sup>540</sup> This intimation of care concurs with Stacey and Suchman, who identify nurture as a crucial facet of animation; care also served as the theme of a 2002 SymbioticA symposium reflecting on the implications of using biological/medical technologies for artistic purposes.<sup>541</sup> Despite the

---

<sup>537</sup> This description is inspired by O’Reilly’s own reference to the pig as ‘dummy, stand-in, double, twin, other self, doll, imaginary self’ in ‘Marsyas – Beside Myself’, in *Sk-Interfaces: Exploding Borders in Art, Science and Technology*, ed. by Hauser (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), pp. 96–101 (p. 99).

<sup>538</sup> Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, p. 99.

<sup>539</sup> Stewart, p. 57.

<sup>540</sup> O’Reilly in Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, p. 44.

<sup>541</sup> See Catts, ed., *The Aesthetics of Care* (Nedlands: SymbioticA, University of Western Australia, 2002) and Stacey and Suchman.

tenderness of O'Reilly's touch, it is difficult to see *inthewrongplaceness* as offering reciprocity, which Suchman underlines as essential to the collaborative world-making ideally forged through entanglements with emergent organic and machinic life.<sup>542</sup> Addressing this issue, O'Reilly states, 'I do not think of the moving of the body of the pig as manipulation — of course it is, but I embrace, hold, carry and lie on, under and in the body'.<sup>543</sup> O'Reilly's emphasis upon herself as the subject of the action to undermine the charge of manipulation — '*I* embrace, hold, carry and lie (emphasis mine) — and her slightly tentative admission — 'manipulation – of course it is, *but*' (emphasis mine) — suggest ambivalence regarding whether in 'toying with' the pig, the animal is implicated in a non-reciprocal dance that can only mimic mutual liveliness.

The passivity implicit in the puppeteering of the sow body speaks to Jacob Metcalf's discussion of the 'disenhancement' of farm animals, which he warns of as a potential goal of biotechnological innovation. In his critical exploration of tissue-cultured meat, Metcalf argues that 'while cultured meat appears a radical break from unfree conditions of industrialized animal life, it may actually be the ultimate extension of disenhancement, creating an "animal" with none of the fleshly characteristics of animality'.<sup>544</sup> For Metcalf, tissue-cultured meat may not offer a liberating, technologised replacement for existing meat practices; rather, it could render hyperbolic the displacement strategies that make meat eating palatable to the carnivorous imagination: namely, the hopeful belief that livestock is unseeing and unfeeling.

---

<sup>542</sup> See Suchman, p. 135.

<sup>543</sup> O'Reilly in Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, p. 44.

<sup>544</sup> Jacob Metcalf, 'Meet Shmeat: Food System Ethics, Biotechnology and Re-Worlding Technoscience', *Parallax*, 19:1 (2013), 74–87 (p. 83).

Other texts have offered visions of ‘disenhanced’ meat, the most notable being the ‘ChickieNob’ of Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* (2003). The first novel in the aforementioned ‘MaddAddam Trilogy’, *Oryx and Crake* is narrated by Snowman (formerly Jimmy), apparently the sole human survivor of a human-manufactured catastrophic disease that has reduced the earth to a scavenger wasteland. His narrative relates a version of techno-capitalism’s endgame as society has been brought to its knees through gluttonous levels of technological, cultural and alimentary consumption. Within the novel, meat becomes a recurrent and powerful symbol of nostalgia and longing. Beginning with Snowman recollecting a childhood memory of watching diseased farm animals being burnt on a bonfire, a particular sense of carnal lack permeates *Oryx and Crake*. As ‘real’ meat becomes a scarcer and scarcer commodity, alternatives begin to be produced in laboratories.<sup>545</sup> One of the most memorable products of this process is the ChickieNob: a headless creature cultivated to produce harvests of legs, thighs and breasts for human consumption. Jimmy is initially nauseated by his first encounter with the ChickieNob, declaring, shocked, that ‘there aren’t any heads [...] this thing was going too far’.<sup>546</sup> While his disgust leads him to declare that ‘he couldn’t forget the ChickieNobs he’d seen’, he blithely consumes the meat later in the novel.<sup>547</sup> Jimmy’s journey from aversion to apathy is less a radical break with contemporary models of food production than a wry comment on existing attitudes towards industrialised meat.

In contrast to the ChickieNob, in *inthewrongplaceness* the ‘fleshly characteristics’ of the animal body have not been entirely eradicated. Rather than offering a being without a head, the pig corpse approximates the imagined wholeness

---

<sup>545</sup> See also Parry, ‘*Oryx and Crake* and the New Nostalgia for Meat’, *Society and Animals*, 17:3 (2009), 241–56.

<sup>546</sup> Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, p. 238.

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.



of a liveable body. However, her lack of internal organs, digestive tract and reproductive system not only makes her more pliant, but also resonates with the disenchantment strategies by which farm animals are inherently ‘emptied out’ to become always potentially dead meat. The implication that *inthewrongplaceness* is purely a spectacle of puppetry confirms O’Reilly as the privileged animator of her lively dance, wielding the capacity to bring things to life through movement. It also evokes one perceived goal of biotechnological food innovation: the capacity to disenchant living animal bodies of their fleshy animacy. *inthewrongplaceness* therefore speaks to fears that biotechnologies are not reducing the instrumentalisation of animal life integral to the workings of the meat industry, but are instead taking this logic to its extreme.

O’Reilly’s manipulation of a disenchanted animal corpse contrasts dramatically with her more recent performance, *Falling Asleep with a Pig* (2009). Initially held indoors at Cornerhouse, Manchester in January 2009 before an outdoors staging at A Foundation in London later that year, this installation presented a temporary dwelling within which O’Reilly and a Vietnamese pot-bellied pig, Delilah, could cohabit over a period of thirty-six hours. O’Reilly narrates *Falling Asleep with a Pig* as an installation conceived following the negative response to *inthewrongplaceness*, for which she had been criticised in the media and through email correspondence with animal rights groups. While she describes how these dialogues prompted her to produce *Falling Asleep with a Pig*, she rejects a simplistic narrative that positions the later performance as an act of atonement for *inthewrongplaceness* and its intimate dance with a sow cadaver.<sup>548</sup> With O’Reilly cautious to avoid asserting species hierarchies to the extent that she redesigned the

---

<sup>548</sup> See O’Reilly in Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, pp. 40–41.

installation between the first and second performances, her emphasis on the cohabitation of sleep suggests a more complex interplay between human and non-human animal than is apparent in reading the two performances as a transition from working with a dead animal object to a living subject.<sup>549</sup> By allowing the audience to catch a glimpse of O'Reilly and Delilah sleeping, perhaps dreaming, hovering between liveliness and deathliness, *Falling Asleep with a Pig* is less an act of contrition than an engagement with the liminal state of slumber as that which conjoins the human and the animal.

Just as *Falling Asleep with a Pig* presents sleep as a liminal state that questions any easy distinction between lively and non-lively bodies, so too is the puppetry of *inthewrongplaceness* characterised by ambiguity. Ngai's discussion of animation acknowledges how the process of giving life to the seemingly inert can unravel the supposedly concrete positions of subject and object. Offering analysis that refuses to let the animator stand outside of the frame as self-evident, stable subject, Ngai argues that animation often 'boomerangs back onto its human agent'.<sup>550</sup> While this description retains the human as the 'prime mover', it places the animated and animator under the spotlight, implicating both in a dynamic that unsettles clear distinctions between subjecthood and objecthood. The refraction of 'thinging' back onto O'Reilly's body is made particularly visible in *inthewrongplaceness* through the stop-motion pulse of her movements as O'Reilly interweaves moments of posing and pausing. The intrusion of stillness into the temporality of the dance speaks to summations of biotechnological control, which

---

<sup>549</sup> See, for example, Aloï's reading in *Art and Animals*, pp. 18–19. The designers of the installation initially included a higher platform for O'Reilly so that Delilah could inhabit the ground space alone if distressed. However, O'Reilly realised that this potentially implied a species hierarchy following a discussion with Haraway; as a result, a ramp up to the platform was added so that it was also accessible to Delilah: see O'Reilly in Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, pp. 43–44.

<sup>550</sup> Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, p. 113.

require that ‘lively processes are held in place in order to be made legible’.<sup>551</sup>

However, the stopping and starting also draw attention to O’Reilly’s stilted body as much as the pig’s, emphasising her inability to sustain a seamless display of animating power; as O’Reilly states, ‘I try and *fail* to mimic the positions of her’ (emphasis mine).<sup>552</sup> *inthewrongplaceness* thus resonates with Sobchack’s discussion of the ‘effortful’ nature of animation, ‘reminding one [...] how difficult it is to be animate; to struggle against entropy and inertia’ and, one might add, death.<sup>553</sup> Belying the suppleness of O’Reilly’s back shown in Figure 12, the uneven rhythm of the dance interrupts the seductiveness of the necromantic phantasy, thereby questioning O’Reilly’s position as unassailable animator.

That *inthewrongplaceness* is not just a dyadic interplay, but also carries the possibility of a triadic touch through audience participation, further allows for the ‘boomeranging’ of animation back onto the animator. The potential consequences of bringing the audience into the dynamic of the performance are recalled in O’Reilly’s accompanying text, ‘Marsyas — Beside Myself’. O’Reilly recounts her discomfort at being touched by a male audience member during a performance. She describes how ‘he put the gloves on and proceeded to touch, to feel out, was I flesh, meat, body, lover, carcass, piece of meat [...] He stayed off the erogenous zones, *just about*’.<sup>554</sup> The repetition of ‘meat’ in this account, as well as the lingering threat implied by the emphasis on ‘*just about*’, underscore how the intervention of the audience can refract the process of ‘thinging’ onto the animator, rendered open to the possibility of being probed, violated, thrown between subject and object through the sudden intervention of another. While Bouchard describes *inthewrongplaceness* as offering ‘ways back to

---

<sup>551</sup> Stacey and Suchman, p. 31.

<sup>552</sup> O’Reilly in Snaebjörnsdóttir/Wilson, p. 38.

<sup>553</sup> Sobchack, ‘Animation and Automation, or, The Incredible Effortlessness of Being’, *Screen*, 50:4 (2010), 375–91 (p. 390).

<sup>554</sup> O’Reilly, p. 99.

the flesh and the body, to the intimate and the personal', O'Reilly's account shows how the 'intimate' touch of the encounter is shrouded by the threat of invasive exposure as a malleable object.<sup>555</sup>

The violating touch that O'Reilly describes probing her body has been understood as a comment on the shared vulnerability of animals and women in the realm of biotechnologies, both often seized upon as prime sites of control and exploitation.<sup>556</sup> However, as O'Reilly reflects on how one can be flung from subject to object in the blink of an eye or the glancing blow of an intrusive 'feeling out', this undermines analysis that clings too strongly to drawing stable parallels between fixed identities. Instead, the flurry of labels generated by O'Reilly's encounter with the audience member — her confused movement from subject to thing, from 'meat' to 'lover' — convey a surplus of meaning to her position that also complicates the position of the pig in the performance. If O'Reilly is more than what any one of these labels can effectively communicate — more than 'just' lover, carcass, flesh — this raises the question as to whether the pig can also move beyond her status as dead meat, evoking the broader potential for tissue cultures to “‘bite back’”, revitalise and re-animate matter'.<sup>557</sup> There is excess enfolded into the performance, which indicates the insufficiency of any one moment or pose to fully capture the relationality in motion in *inthewrongplaceness*.

This surplus underscores the elements of not-knowing and not-quite capturing that are involved in the animating processes of biotechnological research. The taut tension that emerges from the unpredictable excess enfolded into the performance, in particular the participation of the audience, speaks to the sense that

---

<sup>555</sup> Bouchard, p. 105.

<sup>556</sup> See Laura Bissell, 'The Female Biotechnological Body in Performance' (unpublished thesis: University of Glasgow, 2011) and Bouchard.

<sup>557</sup> Catts and Zurr, 'Disembodied Livestock', p. 104.

the possibilities, dangers and anxieties surrounding tissue-cultured meat are — as with any encounter — still to come. In offering a performance of animation that is choreography, puppetry and necromancy all at once, *inthewrongplaceness* speaks to the ambivalence that suffuses accounts of in vitro meat. Tissue-cultured meat appeals by presenting the opportunity to detach meat production from animal death, yet disenfranchising animals of their discomfiting liveliness (and deathliness) could extend the hope that already structures relations with livestock, whereby animals are imagined as though unfeeling and unseeing. Yet, the pulse of *inthewrongplaceness* also indicates that subjectivity is a relational dynamic, one forged through the ‘continuous contact and motion’ that shape the changing tenor of the encounter.<sup>558</sup> The stop-motion rhythm suggests intimacy and connection, yet also startling, if not outright violent, moments of differentiation. Such instants of separability into subject and object speak to Barad’s observation that intra-action involves ‘agential cuts’: moments that allow for subject/object positions to temporarily emerge.<sup>559</sup> *inthewrongplaceness* therefore offers some response to criticism of new materialist discourses for placing stress upon the generative capacities of material vitality over and above considerations of power and constraint.<sup>560</sup> The uneven pulse of *inthewrongplaceness* and O’Reilly’s account of exposure instead draw attention to both the sense of potential *and* the discordant and disturbing asymmetries that can emerge through the encounter, including those involved in the development of tissue-cultured meat.

---

<sup>558</sup> Martin Wood, ‘Agency and Organization: Towards a Cyborg-Consciousness’, *Human Relations*, 31:10 (1998), 1209–18 (p. 1212).

<sup>559</sup> Barad, ‘Posthumanist Performativity’, p. 815.

<sup>560</sup> See, for example, Ahmed and Hemmings.

## Pausing and Stuttering

Surrounded by lilies and jarred embryos, *inthewrongplaceness* offers a slow and tender fantasy of necromancy. The performance is not, however, solely indicative of a hubristic desire to wield authority over life and death. Rather, it evokes the circulating trope of choreography that has become a central part of bio-art discourse with its emphasis upon tactile engagement with emerging life forms. As with projects such as *The DIY De-Victimizers*, the animating pulse of *inthewrongplaceness* draws attention to the emergence of new ‘semi-living’ beings, such as tissue-cultured meat, that complicate any clear-cut division between the lively and the non-lively. The movements of and between O’Reilly, the pig and the audience members render visible a relational dynamic that challenges the reduction of the performance to fixed positionalities or stable identities; instead, it creates lively assemblages, not all fully anticipated outside the moment of encounter. However, in understanding *inthewrongplaceness* as a critical exploration of bio-art’s investment in liveliness, the performance prevents a utopian flight into vaunting biotechnological experimentation as the documentation of ‘pure activity’ or engagement with ‘innately dynamic’ subjects. The visible plasticity of the pig skin and the stop-motion texture of the dance interrupt the seductive fantasy of necromancy to underscore the asymmetries that constrain the desire to overcome the death and killing that are part of biotechnological developments. *inthewrongplaceness* offers a lively dance that resonates with the future-orientated sense of possibility that surrounds tissue-cultured meat. Yet, as with *Meat Love*, O’Reilly’s pauses and stutters keep death intimately and uncomfortably in the frame.

By disrupting the seamless mutability of human and animal flesh through ‘agential cuts’ marked through moments of stillness, *inthewrongplaceness* therefore

performs the ambivalent desires that are bound up in the hailing of in vitro meat as the future of food production, as the textured rhythm and the intrusion of the audience are a reminder of the manipulation and the shadow of disenchantment that can haunt these otherwise open choreographies of biotechnological potential. While O'Reilly's performance is a memory piece that specifically speaks to her own experiments at SymbioticA, tissue-cultured meat remains something of a speculative mode of solving (or enhancing) the existing logics of the meat industry due to its commercial unaffordability. Chapter Seven therefore attends to a rather different horizon of meat eating through an engagement with the feature film *Beasts of the Southern Wild*. Rather than offer the utopian promise of transcending animal death, this fable-like tale of a young girl struggling to survive in a swampland bayou after a cataclysmic storm forces consideration of an alternative future of food production shaped by profound material scarcity and growing 'meat hunger'.

## Chapter Seven

### **‘Every Animal is Made out of Meat’: Visceral Vitality and Carnal Equivalence in *Beasts of the Southern Wild***

Following a successful run on the North American film festival circuit, *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012, hereafter *Beasts*) garnered further critical acclaim upon its commercial release, receiving four Oscar nominations in addition to the Sundance Grand Jury Prize. Directed by Benh Zeitlin, figurehead of the film collective Court 13, *Beasts* follows its six-year-old African-American protagonist, Hushpuppy (Quvenzhané Willis), who is brought up by her single father, Wink (Dwight Henry), before and after a storm that devastates ‘The Bathtub’, a fictional Louisiana bayou.<sup>561</sup> As the pair struggles to remain in the swamplands despite growing material scarcity and Wink’s critically declining health, the film sublimates Hushpuppy’s fears into phantasmatic visions of the ‘return’ of the beasts, the aurochs, from their prehistoric milieu. With these creatures embodying the theme of environmental apocalypse rendered mythically spectacular, they characterise the film’s overarching interplay between the scale of the everyday and the epic. In enfolding this familial saga into the style of a ‘junkyard’ eco-fable, *Beasts* might be read as a post-human melodrama that attends to the struggles of quotidian survival and the sufferings of the surrounding environment.

---

<sup>561</sup> Although The Bathtub is located on the fictional ‘Isle de Charles Doucet’, the location and geographical inspiration for the film is Isle de Jean Charles, an island located eighty miles southwest of New Orleans. Subject to intensive coastal erosion, the area was also greatly impacted by a series of recent hurricanes, including Katrina in 2005 and Gustav and Ike in 2009. It is the historical homeland and burial ground of a Native American community, the Tribe of Isle de Jean Charles Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Indians: see *Isle de Jean Charles, Louisiana*, (2015) <<http://www.isledejeancharles.com>> [accessed 26 June 2015].



Since *Beasts* understands ‘survival time’ as both the everyday attritions inflicted by late-modern capitalism and the mythically imagined spectacle of ecological disaster, how is meat implicated in the film’s attempt to embody these two meanings?<sup>562</sup> With Hushpuppy navigating an oscillating position in a fragile eco-system, co-screenwriter Lucy Alibar argues that *Beasts* is structured around Hushpuppy’s changing relationship with food, moving from dependence to self-reliance before finally understanding its role in providing nurture.<sup>563</sup> By contrast, this chapter argues that by specifically examining the meat economy that runs throughout *Beasts*, one finds less a clear narrative arc than a series of contradictory positions. Whilst other contemporary post-apocalyptic films such as *The Road* (Hillcoat, 2009) position carnal lack as a potent symbol of crisis resulting in the horrifying destabilisation of the line between human and animal flesh, *Beasts* offers a more ambivalent engagement with meat as an object constantly shifting in significance. By tracing the transformations of meat throughout *Beasts*, this chapter asks what ethics of meatiness seem applicable or liveable in times of environmental catastrophe that threaten human futures *and* the future of ‘the human’.

### **‘Wondrous Survival’**

Adapted by co-screenwriters Alibar and Zeitlin from Alibar’s play *Juicy and Delicious* (2012), the film follows its protagonist, Hushpuppy, as she is brought up by her increasingly ill father as a storm wreaks havoc on their bayou home, The

---

<sup>562</sup> The phrase ‘survival time’ is inspired by Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 169.

<sup>563</sup> Lucy Alibar in Adam Roberts, ‘A Food Q&A with “*Beasts of the Southern Wild*” Screenwriter, Lucy Alibar’, *Amateur Gourmet*, (25 July 2012) <<http://www.amateurgourmet.com/2012/07/a-food-qa-with-beasts-of-the-southern-wild-screenwriter-lucy-alibar.html>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

Bathtub, when the levees fail to hold.<sup>564</sup> As Wink's health dramatically declines in parallel with growing material scarcity, the film traces Hushpuppy's gradual acceptance of the inevitability of her father's death following their forced move to, and subsequent escape from, a government evacuation centre and her dream-like search for her absent mother in an oceanic maternal wonderland. *Beasts* mobilises dizzying shifts in scale through the frequent use of hand-held cameras to layer the intimate and quotidian with moments of epic spectacle heightened by a voiceover of Hushpuppy's precociously cosmic insights. This interplay has been praised as a visually ambitious attempt to merge an immersion in the Southern swamplands with a mythical tenor that gestures towards the present and future costs of environmental devastation.

However, this balance between the everyday and the epic is dependent upon the film's immersion in familiar racialised and regionalised archetypes. Centring its narrative on an African-American family struggling to survive disenfranchisement and impoverishment in the US South, the film not only perpetuates the tendency to depict this region as an idealised dreamscape, but also mobilises its ecological thematic by playing off the enduring histories through which black subjects have been over-coded as 'earthy', closer to nature and implicitly animalistic.<sup>565</sup> Tracing the adaptation of *Beasts*, a process which resulted in the ten-year-old white male protagonist of *Juicy and Delicious* becoming a six-year-old black female, Tavia Nyong'o implicates racialisation in the thematic shift of Alibar's original play into a

---

<sup>564</sup> Alibar, *Juicy and Delicious: The Play That Inspired the Motion Picture Beasts of the Southern Wild* (New York: Diversion Books, 2012).

<sup>565</sup> See Jayna Brown, 'The Romance of Precarity II', *Social Text*, (27 September 2013) <<http://socialtextjournal.org/beasts-of-the-southern-wild-the-romance-of-precarity-ii/>> [accessed 26 June 2015]; Nick Pinkerton, 'Beasts of the Southern Wild, Benh Zeitlin (review)', *Sight and Sound*, November 2012, pp. 82–3; and Nick Shapiro, 'Dreamscapes of Dispossession', *Guernica*, (26 February 2013) <<https://www.guernicamag.com/nick-shapiro-landscapes-of-dispossession/>> [accessed 26 June 2015]. For more on cinematic depictions of the US South, see Deborah Barker and Kathryn McKee, eds, 'Introduction: The Southern Imaginary', in *American Cinema and the Southern Imaginary* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), pp. 1–23.

fable-like cinematic treatment of environmental devastation. Reflecting on the film adaptation, he asks of Hushpuppy, ‘why is her narrative of wondrous survival found through such standard tropes as black familial dysfunction, potential violence and licentious femininity?’<sup>566</sup> The presentation of Hushpuppy as the figure required to perform the labour of imagining an alternative future, bearing the conjoined burden of severe economic precarity and the duty of ‘ecological stewardship’, raises the issue of how regionalisation and racialisation underpin this ostensibly post-human engagement with the consequences of climate change.<sup>567</sup>

While the crucial question as to which figures must ‘unbecome’ human to confront the consequences of environmental catastrophe is one that will be returned to within this chapter, Nyong’o’s reference to Hushpuppy’s ‘wondrous survival’ aptly speaks to the reactions of those critics who have largely bypassed these concerns to instead emphasise the film’s contagious optimism. A. O. Scott exemplifies this response when he declares, ‘let’s all agree. This movie is a blast of sheer, improbable joy.’<sup>568</sup> Although more ambivalent, Tom Shone similarly concedes that *Beasts* ‘gets you with all its glorious rot, like mud between your toes’.<sup>569</sup> Shone’s description evocatively captures the mode of spectatorship generated by *Beasts*, whereby one is ‘caught’ or ‘got’ by an immersive voyage into a vibrant, rather than ossifying, swampland environment. The film revels in the transformational potential of physical ephemera, whether oil drums turned into the foundations of houses or trucks used as boats, yet it is also teeming with organic life.

---

<sup>566</sup> Tavia Nyong’o, ‘Little Monsters: Race, Sovereignty, and Queer Inhumanism in *Beasts of the Southern Wild*’, *GLQ*, 21:2/3 (2015), 249–72 (p. 251).

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262.

<sup>568</sup> A. O. Scott, ‘She’s the Man of This Swamp: Review of *Beasts of the Southern Wild*’, *New York Times*, (26 June 2012) <[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/27/movies/beasts-of-the-southern-wild-directed-by-benh-zeitlin.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/27/movies/beasts-of-the-southern-wild-directed-by-benh-zeitlin.html?_r=0)> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>569</sup> Tom Shone, ‘American Exotic’, *Intelligent Life*, (September/October 2012) <<http://moreintelligentlife.co.uk/content/arts/american-exotic>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

Tactile imbrication in *The Bathtub* is particularly enabled through the centralised figure of Hushpuppy as she draws smiley faces on wood with dirt and holds animals to her ear to hear their ‘code’. The gesture of playing with the animal body as though a telephone not only evokes the equation of animals with the ‘telemobility’ discussed in Chapter Four, but also plays off the figuration of the child as inhabiting a special affective alliance with the natural world, ‘passing’ between the human and the non-human.<sup>570</sup> As frequent close-ups of her face fill the screen, Hushpuppy becomes transformed from a diminutive six-year-old child into a ‘gargantuan’ guide standing proudly erect on rooftops and dinner tables.<sup>571</sup> This indicates the film’s fluid movement across scales, in other moments contracting vision to draw attention to the writhing, furry bodies of caterpillars swarming over a leaf. The amorphousness of scale intimates Hushpuppy’s psychic unity with the world around her, whilst her hands-on sensual immersion enables haptic discovery of the energetic liveliness of the bayou.

---

<sup>570</sup> See Karen Lury, *The Child in Film: Tears, Fears and Fairytales* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010) and Shukin, p. 133.

<sup>571</sup> Patricia Yaeger, ‘Beasts of the Southern Wild and Dirty Ecology’, *Southern Spaces*, (February 2013) <<http://southernspaces.org/2013/beasts-southern-wild-and-dirty-ecology>> [accessed 26 June 2015].



**Figure 13**

Caterpillars squirming on a leaf offer a moment of contracted vision.

*Beasts of the Southern Wild* (Zeitlin, 2012)<sup>572</sup>

Patricia Yaeger's use of the term 'gargantuan' to describe Hushpuppy's presence aptly references the grotesque. The word originates from Francois Rabelais's sixteenth-century text *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, positioned as a paradigmatic example of the grotesque by Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin describes this category as rooted in bawdy, if not outright scatological humour, giving an eruptive, 'carnavalesque' potency to the dissolution of bodily borders through such actions as eating and defecating.<sup>573</sup> The grotesque consequently stands in opposition to a 'high' cultural imaginary centred on maintaining bodily integrity, civility and sobriety. The intimation of the grotesque at work in *Beasts* extends beyond the framing of Hushpuppy as a 'gargantuan' figure to more broadly resonate with the overarching carnivalesque tenor established at the beginning of the film through scenes of revelry

<sup>572</sup> All stills in this chapter are drawn from *Beasts*.

<sup>573</sup> See Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Helene Iswoldy (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1968 [1965]).

that follow the residents of the bayou from behind as they run through trees, clutching flares and setting off fireworks that explode into the night sky. Although the bayou's ramshackle appearance already insinuates its eschewal of the capitalist notion of built-in obsolescence, the sense that the bayou operates exuberantly beyond the tenets of bourgeois society is made explicit by Hushpuppy's voiceover, in which she contrasts The Bathtub with 'The Dry World' beyond the levees in which 'they only got holidays once a year'. Plenitude is also registered visually through close-ups of barrels teeming with fish, the gleaming scales of the creatures twitching and shimmering. The ritualistic eruptive joys of the communal feast are a key sign of carnivalesque exuberance for Bakhtin in signalling an unashamed revelling in the pleasures of the digestive system. These mountainous hauls of food therefore underscore The Bathtub as a landscape of material superabundance.

The intimated fullness and vivacity of bayou existence differentiates *Beasts* from other contemporary films swathed in a post-apocalyptic tenor, the most notable being John Hillcoat's 2009 adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* (2006).<sup>574</sup> Mirroring the single father/young child partnership found in *Beasts*, *The Road* follows an unnamed white man and his young son as they embark on a treacherous journey across a USA that has succumbed to an unexplained ecological catastrophe. As a backdrop to intermittently perilous encounters with other scavenging humans including marauding cannibals, *The Road* presents a barren, grey landscape characterised by clouds of fog, desiccated corpses and spindly trees. While the temporal location of *Beasts* is similarly ambiguous — one is left to wonder whether Hushpuppy's milieu is a post-Hurricane Katrina landscape, or a near-future disaster scene — a dramatic contrast between the two films is evident in the

---

<sup>574</sup> Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (London: Picador, 2006).

optimism that suffuses *Beasts*, which seeks to counter the assumption that an environment of abandoned and rotting detritus is intrinsically dispossessed of all hope, joy or creativity. Dispensing with what might be thought of as the post-apocalyptic affects of gloominess and leaden despair that permeate *The Road*, *Beasts* conversely suggests that life can appear plentiful when humans do not regard themselves as the apex of being.

Although this attentiveness to the vitality of non-human life differs from other contemporaneous depictions of ecological catastrophe, it converges with the tone of one particular work located in the emergent new materialist frameworks of recent feminist theory. Exploring how materials form dynamic assemblages that effect change beyond the conscious volition of the human will, Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* traverses topics such as trash, metal, food and worms in arguing that 'encounters with lively matter can chasten fantasies of human mastery, highlight the common materiality of all that is'.<sup>575</sup> Locating her project as a response to climate change and over-consumption, Bennett suggests that receptiveness to the vibrancy of the world beyond the human has the capacity to reshape otherwise destructive relations between humans and the environment. In so doing, she participates in the new materialist tendency to communicate the generative force of matter through a rhetorical positivity whereby engagement with matter's vitality is equated with caring for, loving and being 'in touch' with the material world: an affective arc 'that moves from incapacity to proactive ability, from frustration to generation'.<sup>576</sup> While Bennett acknowledges that theories of vitalism have been dismissed as unfashionable or outmoded, she calls for readers to risk the 'naïve' position of being enchanted by

---

<sup>575</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, p. 122.

<sup>576</sup> This description is used by Hemmings in her critique of the instantiating gestures of the new materialisms, p. 110.

the ‘thing-power’ of the material world.<sup>577</sup> In taking the seemingly naïve figure of the six-year-old Hushpuppy as its enchanted and enchanting guide, *Beasts* shares Bennett’s belief that recognising the dynamic and productive capacities of the physical world can generate a sense of affirmation and ‘good feeling’.

### **‘The Buffet of the Universe’: Carnal Ontologies**



**Figure 14**

‘Every animal is made out of meat’. Hushpuppy gazes down at a visceral, squirming mass of insects.

The close-up shots of a haul of flapping, floundering fish underscore the pleasurable plenitude of *The Bathtub*, bolstering a sense of cross-species fellow feeling. Yet, they also foreshadow the suggestion of a carnal ontology through which one might understand the sensual proximity of human and non-human life. Introduced abruptly

---

<sup>577</sup> Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, p. xiii.



after dizzying immersion in the carnivalesque atmosphere of *The Bathtub*, the ‘Meat’ scene swiftly transports the viewer from this luminescent milieu of fireworks and frenetic music to a claustrophobic, darkly lit, riverside school-hut in which Hushpuppy and other children of the bayou are addressed by their teacher, Miss Bathsheba (Gina Montana). As the scene begins with a birds-eye shot of a mass of red, slimy, crawling insects enclosed in a large tub, their squirming generating an audible squelching sound, the film cuts to a face-on shot of Hushpuppy looking solemnly down at the writhing barrel as legs rise upwards from the melee. The scene shifts to show Miss Bathsheba crouched directly over the mass before she begins to address the children. Pacing back and forth, the teacher is shot from below as though from the perspective of the pensive, watching pupils, instantiating a height difference that accentuates the vehemence and authority of her speech: ‘Meat. Meat, meat, meat. Every animal is made out of meat. I’m meat. Y’all asses meat. Everything is part of the buffet of the universe.’ Here Miss Bathsheba posits a carnal equivalence between living things, human and non-human. This not only challenges the notion that meat is the antithesis of living, sensuous flesh, but also counters the assumption that animals are the naturalised flesh that becomes meat. Resonating with Bakhtin’s summation of the grotesque as ‘a feast for all the world’, Miss Bathsheba’s emphatic claim that ‘everything is part of the buffet of the universe’ suggests a system of living things united by a common materiality: their meatiness.<sup>578</sup>

Taken alongside the film’s initial encouragement of a sensual immersion in the vitality of bayou life, Miss Bathsheba’s speech could offer something akin to a unifying cosmic worldview in which ‘meatiness’ becomes an implied synonym for vibrant, material plenitude. Yet, as the teacher pauses to toss one escaped ‘critter’

---

<sup>578</sup> Bakhtin, p. 223.

back into the squirming, wriggling multitude, this instead suggests an alarming take on “‘horizontalist” aesthetics’: the term Laura McMahon uses to describe cinematic visions that lessen, if not outright flatten, hierarchies between human and non-human life.<sup>579</sup> While Miss Bathsheba’s gesture and the camera’s momentary pause on the watchful face of an owl behind bars provide an ironic counterpoint to the schoolteacher’s ostensibly equalising claim, the film repeatedly punctuates her speech by cutting to Hushpuppy’s alarmed face. Shot in full from above, the framing of Hushpuppy’s anxious expression suggests that to be a participant at a cosmic ‘buffet’ not only demands the fraught relinquishment of human dominance, but also threatens potential immersion in a visceral, festering, homogenous mass of meatiness, as underscored through a repeated shot of the insects towards the end of the scene. The carnal ontology posited by Miss Bathsheba’s speech therefore gestures towards the fearful capacity of meatiness to erase differences when understood as a ‘shared potential’.<sup>580</sup> Miss Bathsheba’s proclamation that ‘every animal is made out of meat’ secures humans a place at the ‘buffet of the universe’, yet the scene manifests the anxious realisation that humans may no longer be at the head of the feast.

The suggestion of a shared meatiness poses the intriguing question of what it would mean to position the human as a more humble nodule in a carnal cosmos. Taken alongside the opening scenes of the film depicting hauls of fish and eruptive revelry, this may not immediately register as an anticipation of profound societal crisis. However, the deadly implications of a carnal ontology are made apparent not only through the visceral mass of writhing homogeneity presented by the insects, but also through the introduction of the aurochs through a close-up of Miss Bathsheba’s

---

<sup>579</sup> McMahon, ‘Animal Agency in *Le Quattro volte*’, *Screen*, 56:1 (2015), 108–14 (pp. 108–9).

<sup>580</sup> McHugh, ‘*Animal Farm*’, p. 25.

bare thigh etched with a tattoo of the creatures.



**Figure 15**

The style of a tattoo on the thigh of Miss Bathsheba positions the aurochs as symbols of a primeval threat.

An ancestor of the domestic cow that originated from the Pleistocene era before finally becoming extinct in Poland as recently as the 1600s, in Figure 15 the aurochs are rendered on Miss Bathsheba's flesh in the style of the Lascaux cave paintings discovered in 1940.<sup>581</sup> This accentuates the aurochs' mythic, preternatural tenor, disavowing their complex modern history.<sup>582</sup> The tattoo shows two 'gargantuan'

---

<sup>581</sup> The Lascaux cave paintings were discovered in Montignac in southwest France in 1940 by four teenage boys. Predominantly depicting animals, the paintings are thought to originate from the Paleolithic period, making them more than seventeen thousand years old: see Brett Buchanan, 'Painting the Prehuman: Bataille, Merleau-Ponty and the Aesthetic Origins of Humanity', *Journal of Critical Animal Studies*, 9:1/2 (2011), 14–31.

<sup>582</sup> As Nyong'o outlines, this overlooks the fact that aurochs became extinct not in the Pleistocene era, but rather in seventeenth-century Poland. It also obscures twentieth-century attempts to 'rewild' their ancestors. Believing the aurochs to be an 'Aryan' species, German breeders during the Nazi era attempted to rewild their relatives, the wisent. Recently, there have been further attempts to rewild the descendants of these experiments, Heck cattle, in Dutch wetlands, pp. 259–60. See also Jamie Lorimer and Clemens Driessen, 'Bovine Biopolitics and the Promise of Monsters in the Rewilding of Heck Cattle', *Geoforum*, 48 (2013), 249–59.

aurochs attacking three small, spindly human figures armed with spears, one lying prone as though vanquished. Although the Lascaux imagery became a symbol of the birth of humanity, Brett Buchanan argues that the drawings of towering bison, reindeer and aurochs register the becoming-human of humanity less as a triumphant moment of emergence than as a ‘fraught adventure’ marked by fragility and the ever-present possibility of ‘one’s own self-effacement’.<sup>583</sup> A further key facet of the discovery of the Lascaux paintings was the fact that they had been stumbled upon by children.<sup>584</sup> In a striking repetition of the perception that ‘it was youth and childlike wonder that enabled the paintings to come to life’ in the Lascaux caves, Miss Bathsheba’s tattoo galvanises Hushpuppy’s imagination as she begins to envisage the return of the aurochs as the dramatic manifestation of the deadly implications of a shared meatiness.<sup>585</sup>

Gigantic in size, the aurochs are depicted as thundering not only through barren space, but also through time from their implicitly prehistoric milieu to the present ‘Anthropocene’.<sup>586</sup> In his exploration of ‘ice age bestiaries’, Matthew Chrulew argues that showdowns with preternatural beasts tended to show the originary triumph of man over animals, signalling the transformation from ‘deep time’ into historic time, and with it, the coming into being of the human. More recently, however, ice age creatures have come to symbolise a threat to the human, acting as avatars for nature’s vengeful response to the environmental devastation that

---

<sup>583</sup> Buchanan, pp. 24 and 15.

<sup>584</sup> As Buchanan observes, reports of the discovery tended to imply the boys were young children, although they were actually aged between fifteen and eighteen years old, p. 20.

<sup>585</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>586</sup> The term ‘Anthropocene’ was coined by scientist Paul Crutzen to refer to the present geological epoch, which is defined by dramatic human influence on the earth’s system caused by vast population increases, industrialisation and urbanisation. He suggests that the onset of the Anthropocene can be traced to the Industrial Revolution in the latter half of the eighteenth century. While the term generally refers to the destructive influence that humans have had upon the Earth, Crutzen expresses hope that it will come to signal our growing attentiveness to the current situation: see Crutzen, ‘The “Anthropocene”’, in *Earth System Science in the Anthropocene: Emerging Issues and Problems*, ed. by Eckart Ehlers and Thomas Krafft (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2006), pp. 13–18.

characterises the Anthropocene.<sup>587</sup> The aurochs therefore symbolise the future destruction of the human as these predatory creatures threaten to explode into the present, heralding the coming of a pre-human and, by implication, post-human era, ‘post-human’ here given alarming literalness by signalling a time in which humans may be even less than meat: entirely absent.

### **‘Beasting It’: Carnal Trophies**

As the aurochs are depicted journeying through from deep time, this displaces the most ominous aspects of a shared meatiness onto an external threat that comes from without. While the aurochs are, strictly speaking, ‘neither prehistoric nor mythical creatures’, in *Beasts* they are rendered radically other as the spectre of impending species extinction.<sup>588</sup> If this gives an insistent sense of mythic time to *Beasts*, the arrival of a cataclysmic storm introduces a concurrent material scarcity. Together the storm and the aurochs make manifest the terms of a threatening predator/prey relationship insinuated in Miss Bathsheba’s warning to the children in the schoolhut that ‘y’all better learn how to survive now’. The dynamics of survival are made particularly explicit through the depiction of Hushpuppy’s father, Wink. A frenetic figure, Wink is driven by a furious need to feed Hushpuppy and retain their autonomy in the bayou despite his rapidly declining health. Following the storm, a crucial component of this ‘tough love’ upbringing is schooling Hushpuppy in a meat economy relevant to a time of growing meat hunger. As the film shows Wink’s face dismayed after witnessing Hushpuppy attempting to eat a leaf, it immediately cuts to a scene in which he teaches her ‘handfishing’. With their bodies twinning one another in their matching blue jeans and white vest tops as they scour the river for

---

<sup>587</sup> Matthew Chrulew, ‘Hunting the Mammoth: Pleistocene to Postmodern’, *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 9:1/2 (2011), 32–47.

<sup>588</sup> Nyong’o, p. 259.

fish, mirroring becomes a key visual mode through which Wink transmits his norms of survival to his daughter.

Handfishing, a mode of catching and killing fish with one's bare hands, has often been sensationalised in mainstream US media as evidence of the 'hillbilly' lifestyles of those living in the US South.<sup>589</sup> While it stands as one of a number of examples of *Beasts* nodding to the particularities of Southern cuisine, it is also an act borne of profound carnal lack. However, the scenes of handfishing are also swathed in an implicit reification of a hardy return to nature, enabling a more 'direct' or 'natural' connection with one's food in contrast to *The Dry World* 'where they got fish stuck in plastic wrappers', as Hushpuppy observes. For Lucinda Cole, handfishing therefore offers one example of the film's tendency to valorise 'the raw' over 'the cooked'. Drawing upon Lévi-Strauss's discussion of this binary as a structuring universal myth, Cole juxtaposes Wink's meat economy based on hunting and the consumption of raw meat with Hushpuppy's largely disastrous attempts at cooking in the family home earlier in the film. This polarity is implicitly gendered; yet, Cole also suggests that the film's valuation of the raw largely obscures Lévi-Strauss's associated claim regarding the structuring poles of the fresh and the decayed. Although animal corpses are shown being fished out of the river, with one notable shot offering a close-up of a dog's innards spilling out onto the ground, Cole notes that carrion remains uneaten by humans within *Beasts*. This contrasts with the aurochs, who are forced to scavenge and even eat their own on their perilous journey. It is here that one recognises a fundamental friction between a post-human worldview that claims that 'every animal is made out of meat' and the limits of this perspective, bound up in the enduring belief that '*humans are the species that will*

---

<sup>589</sup> Karen L. Cox, 'The South Ain't Just Whistlin' Dixie', *New York Times Sunday Review*, (17 September 2011) <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/18/opinion/sunday/the-south-aint-just-whistlin-dixie.html>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

*not scavenge*'.<sup>590</sup> Leaves, carrion and the flesh of other humans are resolutely *not meat* in *Beasts*; while the unwillingness to take the primitivist logic to the extreme in showing scavenging or even cannibalism is understandable, it demonstrates the film's uncertain investment in the implications of its proclaimed carnal ontology.

The overarching valorisation of the raw over the cooked manifests itself most powerfully in the memorable 'Beast It' scene, which provides the most iconic embodiment of the predator/prey dynamic that emerges within the film. Maintaining the overarching valuation of the communal feast as integral to the generation of fellow feeling, the remaining residents of the bayou, a multi-racial, multi-generational collective, gather after the storm to eat a haul of crabs in a floating bayou hut. As one of the men attempts to show Hushpuppy how to crack open a crab's belly using a knife, the film communicates Wink's agitation by frequently cutting back to his watching figure on the other side of the table. Eventually Wink intervenes with evident anger; in admonishing his daughter for failing to 'beast it', he precipitates a collective chant for Hushpuppy to break the crab's shell with her bare hands and suck out the meat.

---

<sup>590</sup> Lucinda Cole, 'The Raw, The Cooked, and the Scavenged: Review: *Beasts of the Southern Wild*', *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 12:4 (2014), 136–47 (p. 143). See also Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology* (London: Pimlico, 1994 [1969]).



**Figure 16**

The pose of Hushpuppy underscores meat as a trophy.

Figure 16 shows Hushpuppy after she has triumphantly leapt onto the table, framing her upper body and face as she pulls the pose of a tiny bodybuilder, flexing her muscles with an unyielding fierce stare shown on her face. This figure, evocative of the hyper-masculine archetype discussed in Chapter Two, performs the belief that meat eating metonymically animates and strengthens the body. However, as the chant of ‘beast it’ hovers close to ‘beat it’ — exercise dominance — the scene transforms Hushpuppy’s evident sense of triumph into an explicit sign of victory. Writing on the communal feast, Bakhtin writes that ‘man’s encounter with the world in the act of eating is joyful, triumphant, he triumphs over the world, devours it without being devoured himself’.<sup>591</sup> Since the erect posture is the quintessential human position that indicates superiority over the horizontality attributed to animals, Hushpuppy’s self-elevation on the table after beasting/beating the crab body into giving up its meat manifests the terms of a predator/prey dynamic by which the

---

<sup>591</sup> Bakhtin, p. 28.



conquering of one's food turns it into a trophy, a symbol of triumph.<sup>592</sup> The 'Beast It' scene therefore explicitly interprets Miss Bathsheba's claim that 'every animal is made out of meat' not as a statement of cosmic oneness, but rather as a vision of competition and dominance: a fight to be the one devouring rather than devoured.

As Hushpuppy and Wink come to operate in 'survival time' following the storm, this positions meat as a valued trophy of human dominance, with the 'Beast It' pose particularly underscoring the relaying of masculinist myths regarding the revitalising capacities of meat consumption. *Beasts'* mode of mirroring between father and daughter evokes a similar current of paternal survivalism found in *The Road*, with the novel and film both working to depict 'the triumphant rugged masculinization of child care'.<sup>593</sup> Yet *Beasts* does concurrently nod to the idea that in 'survival time', one must not only fight against being 'prey' to the mythically rendered natural world, but also to the everyday attritions of late-modern capitalism. In proposing the phrase 'survival time', Lauren Berlant argues that these quotidian modes of endurance necessarily operate in 'the time of not-stopping'.<sup>594</sup> Her summation of the relentless rhythms of survival particularly speaks to Wink's hyperbolically animated masculinity, which often explodes into ferocious aggression to overcompensate for its proximity to failure and breakdown.

Wink's repeated, mantra-like claim to sovereignty, 'I've got it under control', becomes more and more voluminous, but increasingly lacks credibility, as the film progresses. This association of the African-American family with breakdown and

---

<sup>592</sup> See Freud, *Civilisation*, p. 46, n. 1.

<sup>593</sup> Naomi Morgenstern, 'Postapocalyptic Responsibility: Patriarchy at the End of the World in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*', *differences*, 25:2 (2014), 33–61 (p. 42).

<sup>594</sup> Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, p. 169.

black masculinity with threatening violence has been heavily criticised.<sup>595</sup> Wink's agitated manner also repeats the tendency to depict black subjects as excessively animated or 'moved'. Not only does this perpetuate the over-coding of blackness as embodied, but the spectacle of heightened animation also becomes a sign of manipulability and dependence. Wink's agitation therefore suggests the figure of the 'overemotional racialized subject, abetting his or her construction as unusually receptive to an external control'.<sup>596</sup> While this provides another notable example of the film's display of racialised archetypes, Wink's characterisation concurrently acknowledges survival time as a wearying fight against systemic material scarcity. Wink's aggressively energetic figuration is neither indicative of an inspirational capacity and vitality imbued with good feeling nor a triumphant display of 'raw' masculinity; rather, he embodies the violence of 'not-stopping'. The necessity of being constantly animated, as shown through the depiction of Wink, indicates the material costs of constant motion.

Although the 'Beast It' scene has been presented as evidencing the triumph of Wink's norms, friction between the reification of a dominant, 'primal' masculinity and the evident burden of embodying unachievable rhythms of survival prompts a crucial moment of confrontation between father and daughter. As Wink's health visibly declines, this builds to a tense moment of fracture between him and Hushpuppy. Confronting her father in a claustrophobic scene staged in a shadowy, ramshackle room, Hushpuppy angrily asks him, 'do you think I don't see?' While this exchange only obliquely alludes to Wink's deteriorating condition, the incisiveness of her question offers a dramatic contrast to the whimsical naiveté that

---

<sup>595</sup> See Brown and bell hooks, 'No Love In The Wild', *NewBlackMan (in Exile)*, (6 September 2012) <<http://newblackman.blogspot.co.uk/2012/09/bell-hooks-no-love-in-wild.html>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

<sup>596</sup> Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, p. 91.

often tinges her cosmically charged voiceovers. Although Wink attempts to restore composure by demanding that Hushpuppy show him her muscles, calling for a direct repetition of the pose of ‘meaty’ triumph depicted in the ‘Beast It’ scene, Hushpuppy momentarily refuses to mimic his body. This is only a temporary pause as she eventually responds to his invitation to arm-wrestle and, in winning, tells him: ‘I’m the man!’ However, her initial refusal stands as a significant moment of ‘un-mirroring’, forcing a crucial pause in the rhythm of ‘not-stopping’ by halting the ceaseless transmission of Wink’s norms. While Hushpuppy’s earlier iconic pose embodies the mythic equation of meat consumption with the animation of the human body, registering meat as a trophy that signals one’s position at the top of the food chain, the refusal to immediately repeat the pose introduces a crucial moment of disjuncture between father and daughter, and with it, a further transformation in the significance of meat within *Beasts*.

### **Maternal Dreamscapes and the Carnal Souvenir**

Hushpuppy’s moment of hesitant un-mirroring is significant in the narrative of *Beasts* as it precipitates her ensuing attempt to trace her mother in the final third of the film. Throughout *Beasts*, the intermittently aggressive masculinity embodied by Wink is juxtaposed with the alluring promise of the maternal. As in the aforementioned *The Road*, Hushpuppy’s mother is an absent figure. Whilst McCarthy’s mother is positioned as an implicit maternal failure for relinquishing hope and her family in favour of a solitary death, *Beasts* suggests a more ambiguous fate as Hushpuppy states only that she ‘swam away’, positioning the mother as

implicitly hovering between death and abandonment.<sup>597</sup> This ambiguity maintains the maternal as a potent figure of attachment. In an early scene in which Hushpuppy cooks alone in the family home, this act of familial care is imbued with the mother's phantasmatic presence, signalled visually through a talismanic collection of debris topped with a drawn-on smiley face, and aurally as a soothing, seductively soft voice that implores Hushpuppy to 'be good' and tells her that she is 'pretty'. The fullness of this vocal presence recalls Anzieu's *The Skin Ego*, in which he positions the maternal voice as generative of a sonorous envelope akin to a protective skin or comfort blanket.<sup>598</sup> The 'skin of words' through which Hushpuppy conjures a nurturing maternal plenitude contrasts violently with the 'tough love' of Wink whose abrasive voice shatters the enchanted atmosphere, shouting up to Hushpuppy as 'Ugly'.<sup>599</sup> Whereas Wink urges his daughter to build up a meaty, muscly body to guarantee endurance, resilience and self-reliance, the maternal voice engulfs Hushpuppy in its sonorous embrace, providing a sense of plenitude and protection.

This association of the maternal with nurture gives credence to Claire Colebrook's observation that environmentalist approaches tend to invest in familiar gendered binaries, positioning the maternal feminine as the 'alibi' for masculine domination and destruction. This dynamic acknowledges damaging relations with nature through the depiction of masculinised norms of survival that suggest antagonism and competition between humans and the natural world, yet offers the feminine as the comforting panacea through which this relation can be remedied.<sup>600</sup> However, in *Beasts* the implicitly seductive tenor to the maternal voice foreshadows the introduction of a primal scene that positions the mother as originating the

---

<sup>597</sup> For more on the role of the mother in the novel of *The Road*, see Morgenstern.

<sup>598</sup> See Anzieu, p. 179.

<sup>599</sup> Ibid.

<sup>600</sup> Claire Colebrook discusses this issue throughout *Sex After Life: Essays on Extinction*, Vol. 2 (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press with Michigan Publishing, 2014): see, for example, pp. 7–11.

predator/prey dynamic. As proposed by Freud, the primal scene is the imagined (or perhaps real) first witnessing of one's parents having sex, which in this heterosexual framing is often misinterpreted by the child as traumatic violence against the mother.<sup>601</sup> In *Beasts*, the primal scene takes a visual and aural form as Wink, in a rare moment of repose, narrates the mother preventing violence against the father by killing and then cooking an alligator coming to attack him. The consequences of this are made explicit when Wink tells his daughter: 'Hushpuppy popped into the universe about four minutes later'. With the mother dreamily eroticised through her hazy and out-of-focus framing from behind, and explicitly through a close-up shot of blood splashing onto the front of her tight white knickers, the scene plays out the ambiguous sexual excitement that surrounds the primal scene.



**Figure 17**

The blood of the kill splashes onto the mother in this primal scene, giving an eroticised tenor to the spectacle of animal death.

---

<sup>601</sup> Freud, *The 'Wolfman' and Other Cases*, trans. by Louise Adey Huish (London: Penguin, 2002 [1918]).

If there is an allure for Hushpuppy in this recounting, this is because it is a narrative of her own conception, shown to be dependent on the killing and butchering of the gator meat. Eroticising the spectacle of violent animal death, this imagined primal scene does not position the feminine as the panacea to a predator/prey relation. Rather, the allure of the feminine is associated with the procuring and cooking of meat: an act that overrides the film's ostensible preoccupation with the raw to implicate the creation of one human — the birth of Hushpuppy — in the violent domination of animals. This concurrently harks back to the 'primal scene' of the aforementioned Lascaux paintings: the moment that engenders 'humanity's eruption onto the surface of the earth'.<sup>602</sup> The root of the theory of the primal scene lies in Freud's reading of the 'Wolfman', which has been heavily criticised for reducing animals to metaphors in service to human concerns.<sup>603</sup> The espousal of the primal scene in *Beasts* similarly refuses any horizontality between human and non-human life. Here, it is not that 'every animal is made out of meat'; rather, it is the non-human animal that must become meat for the human subject to emerge as living flesh. While the earlier 'Beast It' scene positions meat as 'nourishment and trophy', this primal scene bolsters Kelly Oliver's use of these two terms to indicate how the domestication of the wild animal is retrospectively narrated as 'nourishing' the human into being.<sup>604</sup> Through this act, 'animal flesh becomes the nourishing substitute on which human kinship ripens'.<sup>605</sup> The primal scene not only underscores a sacrificial economy predicated on "the noncriminal putting to death"

---

<sup>602</sup> Lippit in Buchanan, p. 19.

<sup>603</sup> Deleuze and Guattari's criticism of Freud's reading recurs throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*: see, in particular, pp. 30–43. Oliver summarises the case as exemplary of the psychoanalytic treatment of animals, with Freud's interpretation showing how 'much like the Wolf-Man's wild dreams and fantasies, wild animals become domesticated so that they can be put into service of psychoanalytic interpretations and psychoanalytic theory': p. 254.

<sup>604</sup> Oliver, p. 3.

<sup>605</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

of animals', but also positions this act as integral to the 'nourishment' of human kinship: the moment that instantiates the human subject.<sup>606</sup>

Through its retrospective narration of animal sacrifice as the moment that enshrines the becoming-human of humanity, the primal scene in *Beasts* establishes a crucial link between the eating of meat, memory and the formation of human subjectivity. Procured through violence, the gator meat becomes positioned as a crucial conduit back to a lost familial bond, marking the moment that guarantees Hushpuppy's coming-into-the-world. As meat becomes integral to the construction of the human and the union of past and present, this precipitates Hushpuppy's attempt to find her mother, swimming out to sea with three other young girls of the bayou after being drawn to the winking flashing light on the horizon that she imbues with the promise of maternal reunion. Picked up by a passing trawler boat, Hushpuppy is offered a chicken biscuit by an elderly sea captain. With his speech illustrated through a close-up shot of the deck of the boat strewn with a carpet of wrappers, the captain explains to Hushpuppy that the debris of the meat 'reminds me of who I am'. While the packaging offers a striking contrast with the reification of the raw earlier depicted within *Beasts*, it reiterates meat as a talismanic object that stands as testament to the past, its smell making the captain feel 'cohesive'. As the mini-landscape of discarded detritus resonates with the overarching 'junkyard' milieu of *The Bathtub*, the sustaining powers of debris offer an explicit acknowledgement of meat's centrality to the maintenance and unity of the human subject in survival time.

As Hushpuppy tells the captain that she also wants to feel 'cohesive', the film appears to promise such union when the trawler eventually lands at Elysian Fields.

---

<sup>606</sup> Wolfe, *Animal Rites*, p. x

On the outside offering ‘girls girls girls’, inside this is a maternal dreamscape flushed with warm red lights and filled with older women dressed in white dresses. Within this luminescent oceanic space, Hushpuppy seems to spot her mother. The sense of temporal return is encouraged by the film through the replaying of the hazy, out-of-focus framing found in the primal scene, as well as through the slowing of the music playing lightly in the background. Beckoning Hushpuppy into the kitchen to see a ‘magic trick’, the woman proceeds to prepare gator meat with her bare hands. Although the provision of meat manifests the implied second act to the primal scene, there is a crucial disjuncture between the visual focus and the ambivalence that permeates the woman’s ensuing speech. In contrast to the soothing voice that Hushpuppy attributes to the maternal earlier in the film, the woman at Elysian Fields delivers some harsh truths: ‘let me tell you something. When you’re a child, people say that life is going to be all happy and hunky dory and bullshit. But I’m here to tell you that it’s not.’ The staccato rhythm of this narrative of profound disappointment immediately threatens to puncture the idealisation of the maternal figure, offering an internal critique of the film’s own reification of childhood innocence through its figuration of Hushpuppy.





**Figure 18**

A close-up of skin being cut from flesh emphasises the gator's 'magic'.

However, the words fail to hold the child's attention. Instead, the film cuts continually between close-ups of a knife being adroitly inserted into flesh, meat bubbling in a frying pan and Hushpuppy's face, entranced by the spectacle of this 'magic chef' expertly severing skin from viscera.<sup>607</sup> The woman's speech continues throughout: 'yeah, life's a big old feast, but you ain't nothin' but a stupid little waitress.' Evoking Miss Bathsheba's earlier reference to the 'buffet of the universe', the woman's wistful comments puncture the cosmically charged ethos that runs throughout the film with a deflating nod towards the mundane nature of quotidian labour that prevents entry into the 'feast'. While this speech could mark a moment in which the attritions of the everyday explicitly puncture the tenor of mythical promise through which the film's narrative is largely mobilised, the promise of familial reunion and subjective cohesion neutralise this possibility as the film cuts back to a

<sup>607</sup> Alibar uses the term 'magic chef' to describe this quasi-maternal figure in her interview with Roberts.

close-up of the woman's hands coating the meat for frying. Embodying the phantasy of future 'cohesion', the gator's magic overrides the wearied disappointment that permeates the woman's speech.

Leaving Elysian Fields, Hushpuppy escorts the meat back to The Bathtub as an enchanted avatar of human kinship. However, in this moment, the gator meat becomes akin to a *souvenir*. The souvenir is an object necessarily permeated with, and dependent upon, a nostalgic desire, promising connection to experiences that are otherwise lost or inaccessible. As Stewart argues:

we do not need or desire souvenirs of events that are repeatable. Rather we need and desire souvenirs of events [...] whose materiality has escaped us, events that thereby exist only through the invention of narrative. [...] It represents not the lived experience of its maker but the "secondhand" experience of its possessor/owner.<sup>608</sup>

In her examination of the souvenir, Stewart acknowledges that it can be linked to the fetish through the shared promise of providing a substitutive presence that is nonetheless also a testament to loss. This offers a gloss on the enchanting qualities of the gator meat, which are not generated by Hushpuppy's own 'lived experience' of its magic, but rather through the 'secondhand' narration of a compelling primal scene through which animal slaughter becomes integral to her emergence as a human subject. As a carnal souvenir, the gator meat is not desired because it can erase the gap between the scarcity that marks the present and the lost moment of maternal plenitude in which the human subject comes into being. Instead, the longing for gator meat is generated precisely through this gulf; it 'plays in the distance between the present and an imagined prelapsarian existence, experience as it might be "directly

---

<sup>608</sup> Stewart, p. 135.

lived”’.<sup>609</sup> The transformation of meat from trophy to souvenir following the encounter with the quasi-maternal figure therefore necessarily testifies to loss or insurmountable distance: a return that is always impossible.



**Figure 19**

‘You’re my friend, kind of’. Hushpuppy engages in a tentatively peaceful encounter with the aurochs.

What does it mean to read meat as a *souvenir* rather than a *trophy* (a symbol of conquest) or *ontology* (not what we own but what we might, in fact, be)? The concluding scenes of *Beasts* offer one answer as the gigantic aurochs thunder into view. While this moment marks the collision of Hushpuppy’s fears and her quotidian existence, the threat of the anticipated violent showdown with the aurochs dissipates as Hushpuppy turns to face them, telling them: ‘you’re my friend, kind of.’ Spectacular crisis averted, Hushpuppy feeds the meat to a dying Wink, suggesting

---

<sup>609</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

the tender and sentimental unification of past and present through a melodramatic conclusion that closes the meat-infused circle of memory that structures the film. In her assessment of twentieth-century post-apocalyptic narratives, Colebrook argues that so often ‘the manifest content that seems at first to confront radically threatening forces is ultimately returned to the scenes of family drama and romance, as though even the end of human existence could be Oedipalized’.<sup>610</sup> In *Beasts*, the return to scenes of family drama similarly prevents a direct confrontation with the end of the human. Curtailing a moment of post-human alliance in favour of the melodramatic scene of reconciliation, the consumption of the gator meat as souvenir enacts the enduring attachment to familial union and enables defence against the threatened displacement of the human.

While Hushpuppy’s carnal souvenir does herald the sentimental reunion of Wink and his daughter, this conclusion nonetheless replays the primal scene with a crucial twist. In implicit contrast to the earlier actions of the mother, Hushpuppy’s declaration of tentative kinship does not offer the nostalgic promise of return or repetition, but is instead a gesture of solidarity as Hushpuppy metaphorically puts down the gun in favour of a face-to-face, or nose-to-nose, encounter. This moment is not without ambivalence as the radical otherness of the aurochs is neutralised. Revealed in close-up as cutely porcine, the aurochs are transformed from a ferocious, preternatural danger into sweet, wide-eyed animals only bred for meat: pigs.<sup>611</sup> The aurochs’ metamorphosis from carnivore to companionate (and consumable) critter gives Hushpuppy’s qualifying comment, ‘you’re my friend, *kind of*’, an ambiguous

---

<sup>610</sup> Colebrook, *The Death of the Posthuman: Essays on Extinction*, Vol. 1 (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press with Michigan Publishing, 2014), p. 192.

<sup>611</sup> This transformation is largely due to the use of baby Vietnamese pot-bellied pigs to depict the aurochs. Horns and rodent skins were used to make the piglets appear more ferocious and cattle-like: see Jeremy Berlin, ‘Exclusive: The Secrets of the Aurochs (Those “Beasts of the Southern Wild”)', *National Geographic*, (17 July 2012) <<http://voices.nationalgeographic.com/2012/07/17/exclusive-the-secret-of-the-aurochs-those-beasts-of-the-southern-wild/>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

tenor. Yet, as Hushpuppy refuses to repeat the violence of the primal scene, this suggests that understanding meat as a 'souvenir' can create new stories that neither repeat the presumption that the human should or even can be maintained through repeated animal sacrifice, nor cling to nostalgic objects that promise 'cohesion', like the talismanic gator meat that solidifies human kinship in the moment that it is torn asunder.

### **Living On and Living Otherwise**

How should we interpret the spectacle of hopeful melodrama that provides the ambiguously 'cohesive' ending to *Beasts*? The shedding of deathbed tears by Wink and Hushpuppy is the film's concluding example of its emphasis upon feeling subjects. As Wink observes earlier in the film: 'you see what kind of family we got? We got feeling!' It is the overarching focus on sensual affinities that most explicitly signals the film's post-human commitment to an alternative ecology that views life as plentiful and vibrant. The transformation of meat into a souvenir, precipitating Hushpuppy's declaration of a truce with the neutralised threat of the aurochs, also gestures towards a post-human alliance through the sensual encounter. Yet, as much as *Beasts* signals an invigorating openness to a physical landscape threatened by climate change and material dispossession, the attachment to meat as the guarantee of a strong, erect, muscular body and the endurance of one's cohesion as a human subject still registers the film's attempt to grapple with survival time as that which not only affects human futures, but also the very future of the human.

It is precisely this question of time that prompts a return to the grotesque. Bakhtin argues that its eruptive force, always emerging in opposition to mechanisms of power rather than as an outright denial or overthrow of them, is most potent in

moments of fundamental change. While his analysis of Rabelais situates temporal rupture in the transformation from the medieval to Renaissance eras, he argues that ‘carnival celebrates the destruction of the old and the birth of the new world’.<sup>612</sup> More significantly, he suggests that this transformation depends upon the convergence of old and new in the moment of overriding the former: ‘the old world that has been destroyed is offered together with the new world as it is represented with it.’<sup>613</sup> In keeping with this understanding of grotesque materiality, the final scenes of *Beasts* acknowledge a possible move into a new time, a time beyond the human and the talismanic objects that guarantee its continuation. However, they concurrently embody the ambivalence that is always at the heart of the grotesque in bringing together the old and the new in the moment of profound rupture.

This ambivalence permeates the shifting significance of meat throughout *Beasts*. At the beginning of the film, as a corollary to the introduction of The Bathtub as a world of eruptive, ritualistic pleasures, the proclamation that ‘every animal is made out of meat’ is an equalising claim that unifies all beings in a carnal ontology that signals a common materiality. Yet, as Miss Bathsheba’s speech is given in front of a group of pensive children over a melee of visceral, crawling insects, the scene registers the painful psychic transformation demanded by the realisation that the human may no longer be a privileged consumer at the ‘buffet’ of life. Following the storm that devastates The Bathtub, ‘survival time’ and the introduction of the aurochs transform the horizontal inclusiveness of a shared meatiness into a fight for dominance between predator and prey. Consuming meat becomes vital to the mobilisation of a triumphant ‘meaty’ body that marks one’s position as the devourer rather than the devoured. Crucially, however, this positioning of meat as trophy is

---

<sup>612</sup> Bakhtin, p. 410.

<sup>613</sup> Ibid.

displaced by Hushpuppy's retrieval of the gator meat as a souvenir from the maternal dreamland of Elysian Fields. The form of the souvenir signals the psychic longing for meat to function as an avatar for familial reunion, whilst also testifying to the impossibility of repetition or return. More than anything, *Beasts* indicates the psychic difficulty of breaking free from the structures that promise the continued primacy of the human subject in the moment of recognising that the human cannot be, and may never have been, the dominant or supreme force that one believes it to be.

Perhaps this is a post-human ethics of meatiness, one that envisages other ways of engaging with animals that question, even if they do not absolutely break free from, the ritual of sacrifice as the primary mode of relation. Yet reifying the meat souvenir as a symbol of an inevitable and welcome move 'beyond' the human raises the uncomfortable question as to who is required to embody the risks of this shift within *Beasts*. While the 'Beast It' scene is discomfiting in the evident sense of triumph displayed in the conquering of one's food, in this bayou landscape meat is never a given, but is an often frustrated hope. Despite the mythical tenor of the film, Hushpuppy and Wink are not being eaten up by primeval predators, but rather by forces of regionalised, racialised precarity, as well as by a spectatorial experience that is arguably invited to find 'cuteness' in such vulnerability. Wink describes his blood as 'eating itself', whilst Hushpuppy's name is edible: the term for a fried cornmeal ball that Alibar describes as 'a small, warm, stupid, good little thing'.<sup>614</sup> As Ngai observes, there is a consumable and aggressive quality to cuteness as the desire to 'gobble up' the adorable presumes that it can withstand 'extended or unusually rough treatment'.<sup>615</sup> So who exactly is eating whom in this film? Scholars working at the intersections of critical human/animal studies, critical race studies and

---

<sup>614</sup> Alibar in Roberts.

<sup>615</sup> Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 88; see also Lury, p. 99.

postcolonial theory have sought to stress that dehumanisation is not only a mechanism through which a species hierarchy is instantiated, but also a process that is enacted between humans.<sup>616</sup> There is a fundamental tension within *Beasts* between vaunting Hushpuppy as the figure who manifests and embodies the spectacle of a post-human becoming, relinquishing attachment to rituals of violence against animals, and assuming her capacity to bear the load of regionalised, racialised precarity. ‘Sacrifice’ is key to understanding the treatment of animal flesh, yet it is also crucial when reflecting on whose human futures are being moved ‘beyond’, or indeed, *swept aside*, in times of impending environmental devastation.<sup>617</sup>

It is Hushpuppy’s continued investment in ‘being somebody’ that most poignantly demonstrates the tension between the hopes and phantasies that suffuse the fraught everyday and those that shape the film’s epic tenor. The hope of ‘being somebody’ is described by Berlant as ‘a desire for a kind of life, a sequencing of events that make fabulous sense, a biography that, seen from the “outside” would appear to deserve a history’.<sup>618</sup> In an early scene in the film, Hushpuppy hides under a cardboard box and draws faces on its walls as her home burns down around her following a cooking accident. Although Wink comes to rescue her, Hushpuppy’s desire for ‘living on’ rather than ‘living otherwise’, or indeed, simply not living, inflects her voiceover as she invests in her capacity to communicate with future humans: ‘when I die, the scientists of the future, they’re gonna find it all. They gonna

---

<sup>616</sup> See Dana Luciano and Mel Y. Chen, eds, ‘Dossier: Theorizing Queer Inhumanisms’, *GLQ*, 21:2/3 (2015), 209–48 and ‘Introduction: Has the Queer Ever Been Human?’, *GLQ*, 21:2/3 (2015), 183–207.

<sup>617</sup> See also Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, ‘Outer Worlds: The Persistence of Race in Movement “Beyond the Human”’, in ‘Dossier: Theorizing Queer Inhumanisms’, ed. by Luciano and Chen, 215–18. Jackson asks of post-humanist thought: ‘what and crucially *whose* conception of humanity are we moving beyond?’, p. 215.

<sup>618</sup> Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham, NC and London: Durham University Press, 2008), p. 75.



know, once there was a Hushpuppy.’<sup>619</sup> There is an optimistic sentimentality to this statement, a narcissistic, perhaps child-like belief in one’s own cosmic importance. Yet, her hope for recognition by the ‘scientists of the future’ concurrently jars with histories of scientific and medical endeavour in which the bodies of black subjects have been seized, utilised and spoken of as though less than human, more akin to specimens than subjects, thereby harking back to the themes explored in Chapter One of this thesis.<sup>620</sup> Hushpuppy’s refusal of the possibility of her effacement, her enduring faith in the possibility of never quite stopping; these demonstrate the difficulty of grappling with survival time as both the material attritions and violences that mark everyday existence *and* the slowly eroding future of the human.

---

<sup>619</sup> The phrases ‘living on’ and ‘living otherwise’ are inspired by Colebrook, *Death of the Posthuman*, p. 142.

<sup>620</sup> See Shapiro. One can cite the case of Henrietta Lacks, an African-American woman whose cells were procured without consent to become the first reproduced in a laboratory. The cells, known as ‘HeLa’, became the basis for many scientific investigations following their replication: see Rebecca Skloot, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* (New York: Pan Books, 2011).

## Conclusion

### Raw Promise: Beyond Nourishment and Trophy

This thesis has offered close readings of contemporary cultural texts and performances that figure movements and mergers between living flesh and dead meat, focusing particularly on how these ostensibly seamless transformations are structured and disturbed. In so doing, it has foregrounded the tensions that can emerge in the moment of ‘meeting one’s meat’, both within and beyond the intimacies of eating. These contemporary articulations of the carnal encounter have been brought into dialogue with psychoanalytic and cultural theories that provide accounts of the anxieties that can structure relations with meat, including discussions of taboo, abjection and dirt.<sup>621</sup> Concurrent to this, the thesis has also responded to the emergent new materialist debates within recent feminist theory in order to reflect on the future horizons of meat eating, including the impact of increasing food scarcity and the promise of biotechnological innovation in the form of tissue-cultured meat.<sup>622</sup> However, the close readings of the chosen cultural texts and performances have shown how these works do not represent an ambivalence that is already constructed and understood; instead, these productions actively stage and generate ambivalence. Experiments with form offer carnal encounters that are often difficult and frequently strained, thereby enabling them to probe into the process through which one seeks connection with that which one simultaneously sacrifices and consumes: namely, the animal body naturalised as the flesh that becomes meat.

This focus upon ambivalence has been particularly pertinent given intensified media debates over the continued legitimacy of industrialised meat. While these

---

<sup>621</sup> See Douglas; Freud, *Totem and Taboo*; and Kristeva.

<sup>622</sup> See, for example, Barad, ‘Posthuman Performativity’; Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*; and Braidotti, ‘The Politics of “Life” Itself’.

tensions have long been enfolded in the meat industrial complex since its initial emergence in the nineteenth century, this thesis has observed a notable drive to remedy meat production methods in recent years. One example is the ‘new carnivore’ approach, which seeks to provide an alternative to the cruel efficiencies and gross excesses of industrialised meat by preaching compassion and respect for livestock, such as through carefully identifying the origins of one’s food or embracing offal.<sup>623</sup> Such moves to recuperate meat eating often present increased benevolence towards livestock animals as the panacea for the industry’s ills without necessarily questioning the legitimacy of its central process: the transformation of flesh into meat. The resulting calls for killing with kindness, a co-mingling of love and violence, mark an attempt to ‘wish away’ the ambivalence that surrounds the process of creating and consuming meat. However, as a reworking of the truce with carnivorous consumption, such moves to ‘repair’ meat eating indicate ambivalence in the same gesture.<sup>624</sup>

This thesis has explored carnal encounters that deploy the register of ambivalence not only to reflect directly upon the terms of these intensified debates over meat production and consumption, but also to speak to the proclaimed paradigm shift within the Humanities towards questioning the dividing line through which a seemingly self-evident distinction between human and animal flesh has been instantiated. One of the overarching tasks that has shaped and informed critical human/animal studies is the need to fundamentally reassess the workings of the species border. This is not a project of simply erasing or redrawing the line, but of recognising and probing into its multiple articulations.<sup>625</sup> The assertion that the

---

<sup>623</sup> See also Parry, ‘Gender and Slaughter’.

<sup>624</sup> This phrase is inspired by Stacey’s article, ‘Wishing Away Ambivalence’, *Feminist Theory*, 15:1 (2014), 39–49.

<sup>625</sup> See Derrida, p. 96.

animal is the constitutive other of the human subject, and therefore cannot be fully distinguished from it, is an ontological claim. However, it is also an ethical intervention that argues that many of the ways through which the species border is enacted should not be legitimised due to the violence that it justifies and inflicts within and outside of the category of the human. Given that the daily actions of the abattoir continually enact a separation of the human from the animal, staged transformations and intimacies between living flesh and dead meat offer a potent site through which to consider how the species border is made manifest, as well as the circumstances in which its workings can be disrupted.

While questioning the naturalisation of animal flesh as potentially always meat is a key task of any project examining meatiness, this thesis has argued that ambivalence towards meat production and consumption is also shaped by the realisation that meat is not solely what one produces and consumes, but also what one could become. This notion, which I have termed ‘carnal equivalence’, is a forceful challenge to the assumption that one can inherently distinguish between the consumability of human and animal flesh. Across the seven chapters, meat has been positioned as a ‘shared potential’ that can fray the line separating the human and the animal.<sup>626</sup> By following meat across a range of artistic media, this thesis has demonstrated how carnal equivalence can emerge in very different circumstances and genres. Sexual desire, national trauma, ageing, material scarcity, biotechnological experimentation, hysteria and madness have offered some of the myriad contexts within which the line between the flesh that we imagine ourselves to be and the flesh that we may consume can become disturbed. This has enabled

---

<sup>626</sup> McHugh, ‘*Animal Farm*’, p. 25.

reflection on meat as a state that the human and the animal can, in particular circumstances, cohabit.

By engaging with notions of cross-species intimacy, proximity and cohabitation, this thesis has shown how the appeal of the structure of the encounter is integral to the staging of ambivalence across its chosen cultural performances and texts. When it comes to animals, the abattoir ensures ‘the eradication of all relations with them and the destruction of any possibility of experience’.<sup>627</sup> To encounter meat outside of the intimacies of eating can therefore disrupt the sensual exile of animal slaughter. Questioning the tendency to equate meatiness with visual exposure also contributes to the broader shift within the Humanities towards considering forms of ‘sensorial experiencing’ beyond the ocular.<sup>628</sup> As part of its engagement with theories that register bodily being as a crucial element of aesthetic experience, the thesis has particularly worked with the notion of ‘haptic visuality’, which considers the tactility of a mode of vision that brings the viewing eye to the surface of the image.<sup>629</sup> This thesis has also extended analysis of carnal encounters beyond an ocular focus to consider multiple senses in dialogue, including sound, touch and sight, as they are brought into play across the chosen artistic media. Within a shift towards the ‘sensed’ and the ‘felt’ that is arguably driven by a desire to identify ‘a figure for the foundational presence of an experience’, meat has emerged as a synonym for the ‘flesh and blood’ of embodiment.<sup>630</sup> As ‘meatiness’ becomes aligned with the ‘heavy, lived, real body’, responding to the association of the ‘meaty’ with access to the material and the organic has enabled the thesis to

---

<sup>627</sup> Jean-Christophe Bailly, *The Animal Side*, trans. by Catherine Parker (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), p. 65.

<sup>628</sup> Paperburg and Zarzycka, p. 1.

<sup>629</sup> See Marks.

<sup>630</sup> Karyn Ball, ‘The Longing for the Material’, *differences*, 17:1 (2006), 47–87 (p. 48).

contribute to attempts to ‘reincarnate’ the embodied aspects of aesthetic experience.<sup>631</sup>

However, to automatically align the carnal encounter with immersion and the sensual invigoration of bodily being attributes what I term a ‘raw promise’ to meat that can remain entirely consistent with a proprietary approach that presumes that animals are always ‘a means for me’, whether as ‘livestock, tool, meat, body, experimental life form’.<sup>632</sup> The allure of meat has conventionally resided in its function as ‘nourishment and trophy’: while meat provides sustenance as food, the very process of domesticating the animal has also been retrospectively narrated as the act that ‘nourishes’ the human subject into being.<sup>633</sup> The creation of the category of the human is therefore dependent upon the mastering of relations with animals through their conjoined domestication and domination: two words that share a root in the Latin *dominus*.<sup>634</sup> Yet, the curtailment of relation inscribes a sense of loss into the instantiation of the human, which requires the denial of connection with animals. It is for this reason that animal sacrifice, including the transformation of animals into meat, is ‘a melancholic ritual, replete with sadism and ambivalence, which repeats the origins of humanity’.<sup>635</sup> Positioning meat as access to embodiment in its most ‘raw’, transparent or immediate form does not inherently break free from the proprietary stance. Rather, it retains the assumption that meat’s primary role is to invigorate and supplement the human, whilst also offering the raw promise of repairing a connection that has been necessarily disavowed.

In staging the ambivalence that shrouds the ‘melancholic ritual’ of animal sacrifice through carnal encounters, one can put pressure on this proprietary relation.

---

<sup>631</sup> Brinkema, *Forms of the Affects*, p. 40.

<sup>632</sup> Derrida, p. 102.

<sup>633</sup> Oliver, p. 3.

<sup>634</sup> McClintock, p. 35.

<sup>635</sup> Lippit, p. 18.

The chosen cultural productions court the association of the carnal encounter with sensual invigoration, yet they proceed to trouble this through formal means. The cultural texts and performances examined here work to reveal contradictions inherent in ascribing a raw promise to sensual intimacy with meat. They share attentiveness to a paradox integral to the assumption that contemporary meaty bodies offer unmediated, direct encounters. This can be conceptualised as a friction between understanding meatiness as all body — both the body in its most raw or immediate form, and as that which sensually stimulates the body entering into an encounter with it — and ‘no body’, a ‘mere material’ that may no longer register as a body at all.<sup>636</sup> While the articulations of this paradoxical tendency gesture towards the equation of encounters with meat and the possibility of sensual plenitude and immersion, they concurrently work to frustrate their own encounters, thereby disrupting the proprietary stance that assumes that meat (and, by extension, the animal from which it derives) is always a means for the human.

Chapter One has opened the thesis by analysing *Perishables*, a photographic series that responds to the assumption that the staging of meatiness predominantly functions as a visual exposure through which the interior of the body is opened to the gaze. Presenting ageing white women clad in Victorian-style clothing made of offal, the serial form of *Perishables* and its blunt frontality ostensibly construct a mode of looking that references the specimen with its racialised and classed histories, as well as the conjoined abjection of the maternal and animal body. The thesis has argued that the series mobilises a haptic visuality that draws the eye to the undulating folds of meaty fabric that function as a textural double to the wrinkles and crevices of ageing skin. *Perishables* consequently plays upon meatiness as akin to exposure:

---

<sup>636</sup> The phrase ‘mere material’ is from Baker, p. 25.

here understood not as a process of visual revelation, but rather as a synonym for the fragility and openness of embodied life that cannot be fully expunged from the subject. Crucially, as the series mobilises haptics to visualise the disavowal of the meatiness of embodiment, *Perishables* simultaneously prevents meat from being consumed as the supposedly transparent sign of human vulnerability. While the doubling of ageing skin and offal texturally troubles the line between human and animal flesh, presenting meat in the form of luxurious bourgeois clothing indicates the proprietary relation inherent in the seizure of animal flesh as the material that reveals a 'truth' about embodiment. *Perishables* can therefore be understood as a series that questions the proclaimed ethicality of recognising one's 'meaty' vulnerability when it is the animal body that is the naturalised site through which this embodied fragility is made manifest.

Chapter Two has expanded upon this opening reflection on the equation of meatiness with vulnerability by orientating focus away from the maternal/animal nexus to explore meat's implication in the construction of hyper-masculine archetypes in the context of national trauma. This chapter has offered a close reading of the site-specific performance *My New York*, which presents the spectacle of Zhang clad in a costume of red-raw steak. Although this meat-suit was largely received as a compassionate appeal to the citizens of New York in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Chapter Two has argued that this reading obscures the ambivalent gesture enfolded in the suit's display of meatiness as both wound and armour. Rather than read this dynamic of fortification/mortification as a paradox universal to masculine embodiment, Chapter Two has implicated it in the histories of the hyper-masculine archetype. Suggesting that meat has historically been an 'inappropriate object' that has bolstered and disrupted the articulation of white US masculinity against one of



its perceived ‘others’, the East Asian male, Chapter Two has argued that the suit’s ambivalent gesture resists the tendency to see meatiness as that which is embodied or owned by the masculine subject, either as a symbol of virility or as a transparent sign of injury.<sup>637</sup>

Through an examination of *The Butcher*, Chapter Three has continued the overarching interrogation of the association of meatiness with plenitude and immediacy by tracing its implication in this pornographic novella, which is structured around the generic fantasy that one can ‘pierce representation’ through the process of writing sex.<sup>638</sup> While Reyes’s alignment of her female protagonist’s sexual desire for the butcher with the process of becoming-meat offers a provocative response to critics of pornography who condemn its objectifying register, *The Butcher* works its central cliché to exhaustion as a means of reflecting on the ambivalent desires bound up in the process of evoking and inciting sexual arousal through the written word. However, in focusing on the largely elided conclusion of the novella, which explicitly aligns sexual climax with a temporary yet insistent animalistic invigoration of one’s creative fires, Chapter Three has argued that *The Butcher* positions the process of becoming-meat as akin to an affective transformation through which one touches a limit *within* the human. This leaves the animals hanging inert in the butcher’s shop as the ‘absent referent’ upon which the novella’s central metaphor depends; furthermore, the use of meat as a means of thinking sexual desire largely obscures the desire for meat as food.<sup>639</sup>

In response, Chapter Four has analysed an alternative seduction narrative forged through the absurdist conceit of the experimental text *Diary of a Steak*.

Speaking to the emergence of ‘mad cow disease’ in the 1980s and utilising a ‘knot of

---

<sup>637</sup> Bhabha, p. 123.

<sup>638</sup> Best and Crowley, p.15.

<sup>639</sup> Adams, *Sexual Politics*, p. 13.

memory' to link this to other historical figurations of feminised madness, *Diary of a Steak* is centred around an act of prosopopoeia that offers the femme fatale voice of both a piece of BSE-infected meat and a female hysteric.<sup>640</sup> These are two figures that have historically threatened the human/animal divide through the spectre of contagion that they embody. While the journal form and the structure of the psychoanalytic and medical case study ostensibly promise clarity, the text's ensuing opacity, a pastiche of the discourse of madness, continually frustrates intelligibility. As this tension between plenitude and lack produces an 'allurement script', Chapter Four has argued that the resulting nexus of danger and desire speaks to the ambivalent wishes that structure engagements with industrialised meat.<sup>641</sup> With the doubled voice of the 'mad cow' performing a masquerade of meat, *Diary of a Steak* embodies the paradox of visibility that surrounds meat production, whereby the frustration of transparency stimulates, rather than curtails, a desire for meat that is nonetheless underpinned by anxious fears of zoonotic contagion.

Chapter Five has extended engagements with meatiness into the realm of sound through an examination of the concept album *One Pig*. While *Diary of a Steak* nods to the absurdity of giving meat a literary voice, Herbert has presented his album as the sonic voice of a pig bound for the human dinner plate. *One Pig* challenges the sensual exile of the slaughterhouse through an aural engagement with its (necessarily imagined) workings. However, as the album's publicity presents the work as a means of 'reconnecting' with a pig destined for the human stomach, *One Pig* could be understood as a novel extension of the proprietary stance towards animals in turning its titular figure into an object of oral *and* aural consumption. Chapter Five has argued that redirecting focus from this publicity to the listening experience

---

<sup>640</sup> Bronfen, *Knotted Subject*, p. xiii.

<sup>641</sup> Cumings, p. 3.

demanding by the album complicates the possessive relation. Suggesting that the album is structured around 'the strain' as the effortful attempt to hear the receding sounds of the pig, the chapter has positioned this listening experience as provoking resistance to the naturalised linearity of animal slaughter. Chapter Five has argued that *One Pig* courts and frustrates the proprietary relation to show how a desire for reconnection with the livestock animal cannot be sustained alongside its consumption as food.

While Chapter Five has considered the nostalgia that can structure the desire for intimacy with the animal that one proceeds to eat, Chapter Six has reflected on the future horizons of meat production through a shift from the organic farm to the laboratory. The possibility of producing tissue-cultured meat by harnessing the growth capacities of stem cells taken from animals promises to extricate meat production from the abattoir and the linearity of animal slaughter. To interrogate the utopian hope that biotechnological food innovation will enable escape from the ethical quandaries posed by the meat industrial complex, Chapter Six has offered a close reading of the bio-art performance *inthewrongplaceness*. Reading O'Reilly's dance with a dead sow as a simultaneous performance of puppetry, necromancy and biotechnological possibility, Chapter Six has argued that the performance embodies the dual connotations of the term 'animation', which indicates both the liveliness of matter and the process of giving life to the hitherto inert. While O'Reilly offers a tactile engagement with her body and that of the pig, her strained, stuttering movements implicitly critique the fetishisation of in vitro meat as the product of the pure activity of matter divorced from considerations of power, control and death. Arguing that *inthewrongplaceness* is shrouded with the shadow of 'disenhancement' through which biotechnologies continue to strip animals of their vitality as a

necessary precursor to their instrumentalisation, Chapter Six has shown how O'Reilly's ambivalent dance highlights the disavowal that lies behind the wish to simply escape the prevailing logics that govern industrial meat production.<sup>642</sup>

Chapter Seven has extended this focus on the future horizons of meat by attending to the issue of food scarcity arising from environmental devastation through a close reading of *Beasts of the Southern Wild*. This feature film offers an implicit post-apocalyptic tale of survival focused on its central protagonist, the six-year-old Hushpuppy, who is living through the consequences of a storm that devastates her bayou home. *Beasts* merges an intimate engagement with regionalised, racialised impoverishment and a mythic tenor that plays off the galvanising imaginative capacities typically attributed to the figure of the child.<sup>643</sup> This chapter has argued that *Beasts* grapples with 'survival time' as an issue of human futures and the future of the human.<sup>644</sup> Positioning the changing role of meat in the film as a key means of understanding this central tension, Chapter Seven has traced meat's transformation within the narrative arc of the film from ontology — a shared characteristic of all living things — to trophy. As the film concludes with one final metamorphosis of meat into a souvenir, Chapter Seven has argued that this positions meat as both an avatar for the promise of sustained human kinship and a symbol of the loss of any certain continuation of the human. This thesis has shown how the film is therefore indicative of a contemporary impasse. Despite visualising the mesmeric vitality of a world beyond the human, *Beasts* nonetheless positions meat as a key 'sticking point' or issue that complicates any unequivocal embrace of an exuberantly post-human perspective.

---

<sup>642</sup> Metcalf, p. 83.

<sup>643</sup> See Lury.

<sup>644</sup> Berlant, p. 169.

Understanding meat as a souvenir — that is, a memento of a lost time beyond return or repetition — opens up the possibility of relinquishing attachment to the idea that the human should or even can be sustained through the continued ritual of animal sacrifice. Yet, by ending the thesis on a discussion of *Beasts*, this intentionally raises questions as to the overarching purpose of challenging prevailing relations with meat. This has relevance for what might be termed the ‘psychic life’ of the field, or, what we imagine we do when we undertake critical human/animal studies. Returning to Wiegman’s idea of the ‘field imaginary’ — the vocabularies, desires and attachments that indicate belonging to a field of knowledge production — a question posed as part of the Queer/Animal roundtable held at King’s College London in 2012 effectively summarises a motivation *and* challenge for critical human/animal studies: what is the point of studying animals if it does not improve their lot?<sup>645</sup> Since critical human/animal studies is largely shaped by this overarching investment in the promise of ‘world-building engagement and social change’ that can improve the conditions of animals, the transformation of meat from trophy to souvenir in *Beasts* manifests one such ‘world-building’ reorientation as Hushpuppy implicitly rejects her mother’s gun in favour of a peaceful, sensual encounter with the aurochs.<sup>646</sup> Yet, suggesting that meat is something a fictitiously homogenous ‘we’ can simply move ‘beyond’ in the pursuit of reworked models of cross-species kinship and companionship can overlook the question of who precisely bears the material costs of growing food scarcity and environmental devastation that render the

---

<sup>645</sup> This question was posed during an audience discussion at the one-day symposium *Queer/Animal*, King’s College London, (8 June 2012). See also Wiegman, *Object Lessons*.

<sup>646</sup> Wiegman, p. 4.

potential loss of meat less a process of ethical refusal than an unavoidable circumstance.<sup>647</sup>

This issue of the inequalities and violences *within* the category of the human becomes further apparent when one consider the particular bodies that have staged carnal equivalence or provided the bodily surface onto which meat is grafted within this thesis. The ageing feminine body, the Chinese male migrant artist, the female hysteric, the adorably vulnerable African-American child: these are the figures that play out the fears and frictions enfolded in ‘meeting one’s meat’, evoking their historical positioning as ‘others’ within the category of the human. While exploring meatiness can be pertinent for understanding the ‘assymetrical identifications both within humanity and outside of it’, this thesis has not sought to offer an ethics of meat production and consumption that can simply be applied or brought into being by those who seek or presume to embody the ‘post’ in the post-human.<sup>648</sup> By concluding on an analysis of *Beasts*, this thesis indicates the need to continue working through and complicating ‘the human’ *and* ‘the animal’ to ensure that neither of these heterogeneous categories is rendered violently singular.<sup>649</sup>

If our interpretative vocabularies indicate the fantasies, desires and gaps in our political commitments, examining two key terms that have structured this thesis enables reflection on its own elisions and tensions. The thesis has focused on ‘the encounter’ as the primary mode through which humans enter into contact with meat in these chosen cultural performances and texts. This has emerged as a key term for thinking through cross-species engagements within critical human/animal studies. The articulations of this relational structure in this thesis have been chosen precisely

---

<sup>647</sup> See also Jinathana Haritaworn, ‘Decolonizing the Non/Human’, in ‘Dossier: Theorizing Queer Inhumanisms’, ed. by Luciano and Chen, 210–13

<sup>648</sup> This phrase is used by José Esteban Muñoz, ‘The Sense of Brownness’, in ‘Dossier: Theorizing Queer Inhumanisms’, ed. by Luciano and Chen, 209–10 (p. 210).

<sup>649</sup> See also Haritaworn and Jackson.

because they court *and* challenge the promise often attributed to the encounter, putting particular pressure on the possessive hope that can infuse its assumed connective potential. However, in reiterating this vocabulary, this thesis has not only arguably retained some of its promise, but also potentially elided the tension between the reciprocity implied by the encounter and the nature of ‘meeting one’s meat’. In his discussion of the animal encounter, Tom Tyler defines it as ‘a meeting point between discrete partners, which ceases at the moment they combine or separate’.<sup>650</sup> While one can contest the atomism implied by Tyler’s stress upon prior ‘discreteness’, he proceeds to equate this ‘meeting point’ with ‘effective interchange’, the generation of ‘mutual interest’ and ‘productive provocation’.<sup>651</sup> While to enter into contact with meat can reveal a commonality of form or a temporary carnal equivalence, it is difficult to position this as a reciprocal moment of ‘interchange’ or ‘mutual interest’. The phrase ‘meeting one’s meat’ has been deployed in this thesis to evoke the ambiguity of its carnal encounters, introducing uncertainty as to whether this is the meat that one owns and eats, or the meat that one could become. However, the pun remains largely at the expense of the animal for whom this question is answered, having already been transformed into consumable flesh across these cultural performances and texts. To utilise ‘the encounter’ to describe contact with meat not only fails to entirely shed the promise that is typically attached to the term, but also potentially elides the crucial imbalance that is always present in the collisions between humans and the animal body that has been turned into meat.

Since the carnal encounter is necessarily flooded with promise *and* threat for the elements it brings into collision, this aptly evokes another key term that has

---

<sup>650</sup> Tyler, ‘Introduction: The Case of the Camel’, in *Animal Encounters*, ed. by Tyler and Rossini, pp. 1–12 (p. 3).

<sup>651</sup> Ibid.

structured this thesis: ‘ambivalence’. One question that remains is whether a focus on ambivalence allows for critical reflection on the workings of the meat industrial complex, or whether, as those such as Shukin suggest, it actually enables its functioning.<sup>652</sup> A ‘knot of memory’ is deployed within *Diary of a Steak*, yet one could also speak of the ‘knot’ of danger, desire and disgust that shapes relations with meat. This knot does not dissipate the desire for meat; instead, it appears to actively produce and maintain it. Rather than claim that staging ambivalence through carnal encounters resolves the strategies through which the meat industry operates, this thesis has suggested that it can temporarily stall the complex entanglement of paradoxes and disavowals that are bound up in meat eating. Forcing us to inhabit this potentially complicit nexus may not untangle the ‘knot’ of the meat industry, but it does position it as a site to be further unpicked and worked on in continuing attempts to rethink cross-species relations.

Given that ambivalence is not just the enfolding of love and hate, but also uncertainty in its broadest sense, it could be argued that the engagement with ostensibly disparate theoretical texts is characteristic of a fundamental analytic or conceptual ambivalence. Psychoanalytic and cultural theories of dirt, taboo and abjection have been brought into play alongside new materialist work that has largely argued that the former serves to re-entrench the primacy afforded the human subject. This thesis has not attempted to reconcile or dissolve the tensions between these bodies of theory. However, what is evident across the readings is the extent to which psychoanalytic and cultural studies remain present, even within the later articulations of the carnal encounter that resonate much more fully with the concerns of the new materialist shifts. For example, O’Reilly’s sensual entanglement with a sow cadaver

---

<sup>652</sup> Shukin, pp. 5–6.



in *inthewrongplaceness* gestures towards the continued taboo that surrounds particular intimacies with dead meat, whilst *Beasts* offers an indisputable primal scene. The point is not that psychoanalytic and cultural theories are the evident panacea to the questions posed by critical human/animal studies. Not only do many such theories repeat an antagonistic and hierarchical relation between humans and animals, but works such as Freud's *Totem and Taboo* also perpetuate a violently racialised separation within the human. This supposed 'return' to the cultural and psychoanalytic could also be read as a failure of nerve, symptomatic of a tendency to reach back to familiar accounts of human subjectivity rather than push thinking into non-humanist spheres. That these articulations of the carnal encounter resonate with aspects of both fields of theory suggests that there is something 'sticky' about the topic of meat that prevents unequivocal flight beyond the human. This inability to simply escape into the future horizons of meat eating shows the lingering ethical quandaries that cannot simply be 'wished away' through emphasising the overarching vitality of matter.

Since these knots of ambivalence are woven tight, it is through staging and inhabiting these paradoxical structures and mechanisms that one can register what is at stake in meat. The carnal encounters examined in this thesis have shown how meat can be a space of cohabitation, yet is always riven with the shadow of the ritual that ensures that meat is simultaneously one of the most potent symbols of the violence that the species border legitimises, and therefore one of the most pressing sites of engagement for critical human/animal studies. While exploring the carnal encounter may not always enable 'world building' or directly 'change the lot' of animals, it can identify sites of impasse, underscoring the need for critical human/animal studies to

continue working through the registers of intimacy and kinship precisely in the moments when they seem jeopardised, difficult or strained.

## Bibliography

- Abbot, Phil, 'Erotic Crusader: Alina Reyes', *Freezerbox*, (31 May 2001)  
<<http://www.freezerbox.com/archive/article.php?id=127>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Adams, Carol, *The Pornography of Meat* (New York and London: Continuum, 2004)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist Vegetarian Theory* (New York and London: Continuum, 2010 [1990])
- Adams, Carol J., and Annie Potts, 'The Politics of Carol J. Adams', *Antennae*, 14 (2010), 12–24
- Ahmed, Sara, 'Imaginary Prohibitions: Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the "New Materialism"', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 15:1 (2008), 23–39
- Alaimo, Stacy, 'Trans-Corporeal Feminism and the Ethical Space of Nature', in *Material Feminisms*, ed. by Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), pp. 237–64
- Alibar, Lucy, *Juicy and Delicious: The Play That Inspired the Motion Picture Beasts of the Southern Wild* (New York: Diversion Books, 2012)
- Aloi, Giovanni, *Art and Animals* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012)
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Editorial: Antennae Issue 27', *Antennae*, 27 (2013), p. 3
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed., 'Meet Animal Meat', *Antennae*, 15 (2010), 1–71
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed., 'Pig', *Antennae*, 12 (2010), 1–97
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed., 'The Politics of Meat', *Antennae*, 14 (2010), 1–74
- Aloi, Giovanni, and Chris Hunter, 'Slaughterhouse: The Task of Blood', *Antennae*, 5 (2008), 25–29
- van Alpha, Ernst, and Mieke Bal, 'Introduction', in *The Rhetoric of Sincerity*, ed. by van Alpha, Bal and Carel Smith (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 1–16

American Federation of Labour, *Some Reasons for Chinese Exclusion: Meat vs Rice: American Manhood against Asiatic Coolieism: Which Shall Survive?* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1902)

Anon., 'The Big Sell', *Independent*, (27 February 1993)  
<<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/the-big-sell-behind-closed-dors-deep-in-a-swindon-warehouse-an-independent-journalist-hears-salesmen-offering-sex-crime-culture-and-food-to-mr-big-a-27000word-nonfiction-blockbuster-1475647.html>> [accessed 26 June 2015]

Anon., 'From the Archive, 20 January 1960: Horsemeat Scandal: Irish PM Defends Shipping of Livestock', *Guardian*, (29 January 2014)  
<<http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2014/jan/20/horsemeat-scandal-ireland-1960>> [accessed 26 June 2015]

Anon., 'Hamburger Junction', *Economist*, (25 February 2012)  
<<http://www.economist.com/node/21548147>> [accessed 26 June 2015]

Anon., 'A Meaty Question: Who Should Regulate Kosher and Halal Food?', *Economist*, (9 February 2013)  
<<http://www.economist.com/news/international/21571419-who-should-regulate-kosher-and-halal-food-meaty-question>> [accessed 26 June 2015]

Anzieu, Didier, *The Skin Ego*, trans. by Chris Turner (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1989)

Atwood, Margaret, *MaddAddam* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013)

\_\_\_\_\_, *Oryx and Crake* (London: Virago, 2003)

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Year of the Flood* (London: Virago, 2009)

Autograph ABP, 'Black Chronicles II', *Autograph ABP*, (2014) <<http://autograph-abp.co.uk/exhibitions/black-chronicles-ii>> [accessed 26 June 2015]

\_\_\_\_\_, 'The Missing Chapter', *Autograph ABP*, (2014) <<http://autograph-abp.co.uk/autographabp/the-missing-chapter>> [accessed 26 June 2015]

Bailly, Jean-Christophe, *The Animal Side*, trans. by Catherine Parker (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011)

- Bainbridge, Jason, “‘Worlds within Worlds’: The Role of Superheroes in the Marvel and DC Universes’, in *The Contemporary Comic Book Superhero*, ed. by Angela Ndalani (New York and London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 64–85
- Baker, Steve, *The Postmodern Animal* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000)
- Bakhtin, Mikhail M., *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1968 [1965]).
- Bakke, Monika, ‘Zoe-Philic Desires: Wet Media Art and Beyond’, *Parallax*, 14:3 (2008), 21–34
- Ball, Karyn, ‘The Longing for the Material’, *differences*, 17:1 (2006), 47–87
- Barad, Karen, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2007)
- , ‘Posthumanist Performativity: Towards an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter’, *Signs*, 28:3 (2003), 801–31
- Barker, Deborah, and Kathryn McKee, ‘Introduction: The Southern Imaginary’, in *American Cinema and the Southern Imaginary*, ed. by Barker and McKee (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), pp. 1–23
- Barker, Jennifer M., *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009)
- Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers (London: Vintage Books, 2009 [1957])
- Bataille, Georges, *Eroticism*, trans. by Mary Dalwood (London and New York: Penguin, 2001 [1957])
- Bean, Robert, “‘It’s Good to Talk’ — The Story Behind the Campaign’, *Campaign*, (16 September 2009) <<http://www.campaignlive.co.uk/news/938629/>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Beasts of the Southern Wild*, dir. by Benh Zeitlin (Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2012)
- Beer, Gillian, ‘Animal Presences: Tussles with Anthropomorphism’, *Comparative Critical Studies*, 2:3 (2005), 311–22

- Beizer, Janet, *Ventriloquized Bodies: Narratives of Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1993)
- Bell, David, 'Meat and Metal', in *The Subcultures Reader*, ed. by Ken Gelder (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 555–63
- Benjamin, Walter, 'One-Way Street', in *Selected Writings: Volume 1: 1913–1926* (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 444–88
- Bennett, Jane, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010)
- Bennett, Matthew, 'Matthew Herbert's *One Pig*', *Clash Music*, (12 October 2011) <<http://www.clashmusic.com/feature/matthew-herberts-one-pig>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Berger, John, 'Why Look at Animals?' in *About Looking* (London: Bloomsbury, 1980), pp. 3–30.
- Berlant, Lauren, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2011)
- , *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2008)
- Berlin, Jeremy, 'Exclusive: The Secrets of the Aurochs (Those "Beasts of the Southern Wild")', *National Geographic*, (17 July 2012) <<http://voices.nationalgeographic.com/2012/07/17/exclusive-the-secret-of-the-aurochs-those-beasts-of-the-southern-wild/>> [accessed 26 June 2015].
- Best, Victoria, and Martin Crowley, *The New Pornographies: Explicit Sex in Recent French Film and Fiction* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2007)
- Betterton, Rosemary, *An Intimate Distance: Women, Artists and the Body* (London: Routledge, 1996)
- Bhabha, Homi, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994)
- Birke, Lynda, Mette Bryld and Nina Lykke, 'Animal Performances: An Exploration of the Intersections Between Feminist Science Studies and Studies of Human/Animal Relationships', *Feminist Theory*, 5:2 (2004), 167–83

- Bissell, Laura, 'The Female Biotechnological Body in Performance' (unpublished thesis: University of Glasgow, 2011)
- Blessner, Barry, and Linda-Ruth Salter, 'Ancient Acoustic Spaces', in *The Sound Studies Reader*, ed. by Jonathan Sterne (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 186–96
- Book of Joe, 'Pinar Yolaçan is "The Tripe Artist"', *Book of Joe*, (22 November 2014) <[http://www.bookofjoe.com/2004/11/pinar\\_yolacan\\_i.html](http://www.bookofjoe.com/2004/11/pinar_yolacan_i.html)> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Bouchard, Gianna, 'Skin Deep: Female Flesh in UK Live Art Since 1999', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 22:1 (2012), 94–105
- Le Boucher*, dir. by Claude Chabrol (Parafrance Films, 1970)
- Bourette, Susan, *Meat: A Love Story: My Year in Search of the Perfect Meal* (New York: G. P. Putnam's, 2008)
- Bovier, Lionel, ed., *Linder: Works 1976–2006* (Zurich: JRP-Ringier; New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2006)
- Bowlby, Rachel, 'Introduction', in *Studies in Hysteria*, by Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer, trans. by Nicola Luckhurst (London: Penguin Books, 2004 [1957]), pp. vii–xxiii
- Boyd, William, 'Making Meat: Science, Technology and American Poultry Production', in *Environmental History and the American South*, ed. by Paul S. Sutter and Christophe J. Maysalle (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2009), pp. 311–44
- Braidotti, Rosi, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002)
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Politics of "Life" Itself and New Ways of Dying', in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency and Politics*, ed. by Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 201–20
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2006)

Bray, Robert W., 'History of Meat Science', *American Meat Science Association*, (1997) <<http://www.meatscience.org/about-amsa/history-mission/history-of-meat-science>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

Brinkema, Eugenie, 'Critique of Silence', *differences*, 22:2/3 (2011), 211–34

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Forms of the Affects* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2014)

Broglio, Ron, 'Living Flesh: Animal–Human Surfaces', *Journal of Visual Culture*, 7:1 (2008), 103–21

\_\_\_\_\_, *Surface Encounters: Thinking with Animals and Art* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011)

Bronfen, Elisabeth. *The Knotted Subject: Hysteria and its Discontents* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998)

\_\_\_\_\_, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991)

Brown, Jayna, 'The Romance of Precarity II', *Social Text*, (27 September 2013) <<http://socialtextjournal.org/beasts-of-the-southern-wild-the-romance-of-precarity-ii/>> [accessed 26 June 2015]

Brown, Richard, *Biotica: Art, Emergence and Artificial Life* (London: RCA Research, 2001)

Buchanan, Brett, 'Painting the Prehuman: Bataille, Merleau-Ponty, and the Aesthetic Origins of Humanity', *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 9:1/2 (2011), 14–31

Bukatman, Scott, *Matters of Gravity: Special Effects and Superman in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2003)

Burt, Jonathan, 'Conflicts Around Slaughter in Modernity', in *Killing Animals*, ed. by The Animal Studies Group (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), pp. 120–44

Butler, Judith, 'Afterword', in *The Scandal of the Speaking Body: Don Juan with J.L. Austin, or, Seduction in Two Languages*, by Shoshana Felman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1980), pp. 113–24

\_\_\_\_\_, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009)



- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Merely Cultural', *Social Text*, 52/53 (1997), 265–77
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004)
- Calarco, Matthew, 'Faced by Animals', in *Radicalizing Levinas*, ed. by Peter Atterton and Calarco (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2010), pp. 113–33
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008)
- Carné*, dir. by Gaspar Noé (Action Gitanes, 1991)
- Carolan, Michael, *Embodied Food Politics* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011)
- Carrington, Damian, 'Eating Less Meat Essential to Curb Climate Change, Says Report', *Guardian*, (3 December 2014)  
<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/dec/03/eating-less-meat-curb-climate-change> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Carter, Angela, *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (London: Virago, 1979)
- Cartwright, Lisa, *Moral Spectatorship: Technologies of Voice and Affect in Postwar Representations of the Child* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2008)
- Catts, Oron, ed., *The Aesthetics of Care* (Nedlands: SymbioticA, University of Western Australia, 2002)
- Catts, Oron, and Gary Cass, 'Labs Shut Open: A Biotech Hands-On Workshop for Artists', in *Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism and Technoscience*, ed. by Beatriz da Costa and Kavita Philip (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), pp. 125–42
- Catts, Oron, and Ionat Zurr, 'Disembodied Livestock: The Promise of a Semi-Living Utopia', *Parallax*, 19:11 (2013), 101–13
- Caverero, Adriana, *For More Than One Voice: Towards a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. by Paul Kottman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Horrorism: Naming Contemporary Violence*, trans. by William McCuaig (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007)

- \_\_\_\_\_, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, trans. by Paul Kottmann (London and New York: Routledge, 2000)
- Chen, Jachinson, *Chinese American Masculinities: From Fu Manchu to Bruce Lee* (New York: Routledge, 2001)
- Chion, Michael, 'Let's Have Done With the Notion of Noise', *differences*, 22:2/3 (2011), 240–48
- Chrulew, Matthew, 'Hunting the Mammoth: Pleistocene to Postmodern', *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 9:1/2 (2011), 32–47
- Claflin, Kyn, 'La Villette: City of Blood (1867–1914)', in *Meat, Modernity and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse*, ed. by Paula Young Lee (Lebanon: University of New Hampshire Press, 2008), pp. 27–45
- Coff, Christian, *A Taste for Ethics: An Ethics of Food Consumption* (Berlin: Springer, 2006)
- Cohen Shabot, Sara, 'Grotesque Bodies: A Response to Disembodied Cyborgs', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 15:3 (2006), 223–35
- Cole, Lucinda, 'The Raw, The Cooked, and the Scavenged: Review: *Beasts of the Southern Wild*', *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 12:4 (2014), 136–47
- Colebrook, Claire, *The Death of the Posthuman: Essays on Extinction*, Vol. 1 (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press with Michigan Publishing, 2014)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Sex After Life: Essays on Extinction*, Vol. 2 (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press with Michigan Publishing, 2014)
- The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971)
- Connor, Steve, 'Special Report: "In Vitro" Beef – It's the Meat of the Future', *Independent*, (28 July 2013)  
 <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/special-report-in-vitro-beef--its-the-meat-of-the-future-8735104.html>> [accessed 26 June 2015].
- Connor, Steven, *The Book of Skin* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000)

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Edison's Teeth: Touching Hearing', in *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening and Modernity*, ed. by Veit Erlman (Oxford: Berg, 2004), pp. 153–72

Coole, Diana, and Samantha Frost, 'Introducing the New Materialisms', in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency and Politics*, ed. by Coole and Frost (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 1–46

Cottom, Daniel, *Cannibals and Philosophers: Bodies of Enlightenment* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 2001)

Cox, Karen L., 'The South Ain't Just Whistlin' Dixie', *New York Times Sunday Review*, (17 September 2011)  
<[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/18/opinion/sunday/the-south-aint-just-whistlin-dixie.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/18/opinion/sunday/the-south-aint-just-whistlin-dixie.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)> [accessed 26 June 2015]

Creed, Barbara, *Darwin's Screens: Evolutionary Aesthetics, Time and Sexual Display in Cinema* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2009)

Cristofovici, Anca, *Touching Surfaces: Photographic Aesthetics, Temporality, Aging* (New York: Rodopi, 2009)

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Touching Surfaces: Photography, Aging and Aesthetics of Change', in *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations*, ed. by Katherine M. Woodward (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 268–96

Cronin, J. Keri, 'Can't You Talk? Voice and Visual Culture in Early Animal Welfare Campaigns', *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 9:3 (2011), 203–23

Crumley, Bruce, 'As the Horsemeat Hysteria Spreads, EU Opens a Mad-Cow Can of Worms', *Time*, (19 February 2013) <<http://world.time.com/2013/02/19/as-the-horsemeat-hysteria-spreads-e-u-opens-a-mad-cow-can-of-worms/>> [accessed 26 June 2015]

Crutzen, Paul, 'The "Anthropocene"', in *Earth System Science in the Anthropocene: Emerging Issues and Problems*, ed. by Eckart Ehlers and Thomas Krafft (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2006), pp. 13–18.

Cummings, Katherine, *Telling Tales: The Hysteric's Seduction in Fiction and Theory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991)

- Currarino, Rosanne, 'Meat vs Rice: The Ideal of Manly Labour and Anti-Chinese Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century America', *Men and Masculinities*, 9:4 (2007), 476–90
- Darrieussecq, Marie, *Pig Tales: A Novel of Lust and Transformation*, trans. by Linda Coverdale (London: Faber and Faber, 1996)
- Defalco, Amelia, 'Haunting Physicality: Corpses, Cannibalism and Carnality in Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 75:2 (2006), 771–83
- Deleuze, Gilles, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. by Daniel W. Smith (New York: Continuum, 2004)
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 2004 [1987])
- Deller, Rosemary, 'Dead Meat: Feeding at the Anatomy Table of Gunther von Hagens' *Body Worlds*', *Feminist Theory*, 12:3 (2011), 241–61
- Denean Sharpley-Whiting, Tracy, *Black Venus: Sexualised Savages, Primal Fears and Primitive Narratives in French* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1990)
- Derrida, Jacques, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. and ed. by Marie-Louise Millot (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008)
- Descartes, René, 'Animals are Machines', in *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*, ed. by Susan Armstrong and Richard Botzler (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), pp. 281–84
- Didi-Huberman, Georges, *The Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Imagery of Salpêtrière* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2004)
- Dixon, Deborah P., 'The Blade and the Claw: Science, Art and the Creation of the Lab-Born Monster', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 9:6 (2008), 671–92
- Doane, Mary Ann, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991)
- Dolar, Mladen, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2006)

- Dougherty, Liam, Emily R. Burdfield-Steel and David M. Shuker, 'Sexual Stereotypes: The Case of Sexual Cannibalism', *Animal Behaviour*, 85 (2013), 313–22
- Douglas, Mary, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003 [1966])
- Downing, Lisa, 'Feminist Fictions of the Flesh (?): Alina Reyes's *Le Boucher* and Rachilde's *La Marquise de Sade*', *Journal of Romance Studies*, 2:1 (2002), 51–64
- Dryje, František, 'The Force of Imagination', in *The Cinema of Jan Švankmajer*, ed. by Peter Hames (London: Wallflower, 1995), pp. 143–203
- Duff, Tagny, 'Going Viral: Live Performance and Documentation in the Scientific Laboratory', *Performance Research*, 14:4 (2009), 36–44
- Durden, Mark, 'Negotiating Difference: The Transactions of Portraiture', in *Masquerade: Women's Contemporary Portrait Photography*, Vol. 2, ed. by Kate Newton and Christine Rolph (Cardiff: Ffotogallery, 2003), pp. 7–9
- Dyer, Richard, 'Don't Look Now: The Male Pin-Up', in *The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality*, ed. by Mandy Merck (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 265–76
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Pastiche* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997)
- Eggert, Jobst, and Matthew Herbert, 'Matthew Herbert vs PETA', (3 November 2011) <<http://matthewherbert.com/matthew-herbert-vs-peta/>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Eley, Craig, "'Making them Talk': Animals, Sound and Museums", *Antennae*, 22:2/3 (2011), 6–18
- Ellis, Hattie, *Planet Chicken: The Shameful Story of the Bird on Your Plate* (London: Sceptre, 2007)
- Ellman, Maud, 'Psychoanalytic Animal', in *A Concise Companion to Psychoanalysis, Literature and Culture*, ed. by Laura Marcus and Ankhi Mukherjee (Chichester: John Wiley, 2014), pp. 328–50

- Eng, David L., *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001)
- Erlman, Veit, ed., *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening and Modernity* (Oxford: Berg, 2004)
- Evans, Caroline, *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity and Deathliness* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2003)
- Ewing, William A., 'Pinar Yolaçan: Selected Work by Pinar Yolaçan', *Saatchi Gallery*, (2012) <[http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/pinar\\_yolacan.htm?section\\_name=photography](http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/pinar_yolacan.htm?section_name=photography)> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- The Falling*, dir. by Carol Morley (Metronome Distribution, 2014)
- Faludi, Susan, *The Terror Dream: What 9/11 Revealed About America* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007)
- Faygal, Zsuzsanna, Douglas Kibee and Frederic Jenkins, *French: A Linguistic Introduction* (Boston, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2006)
- Ferguson, Kevin L., 'Panting in the Dark: The Ambivalence of Air in Cinema', *Camera Obscura*, 26:2 (2011), 33–63
- Fiddes, Nick, *Meat: A Natural Symbol* (London: Routledge, 1991)
- Flaig, Paul, 'Life Driven by Death: Animation Aesthetics and the Comic Uncanny', *Screen*, 54:1 (2013), 1–19
- Foer, Jonathan Safran, *Eating Animals* (London: Penguin Books, 2009)
- Foster, Hal, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1996)
- Foucault, Michel, 'Animality and Insanity', in *Animal Philosophy: Essential Reading in Continental Thought*, ed. by Matthew Calarco and Peter Atterton (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 65–71
- Frankenberg, Ruth, *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997)
- Franklin, Sarah, *Dolly Mixtures: The Remaking of Genealogy* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2007)

- Freud, Sigmund, *Civilisation and its Discontents*, trans. by David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2002 [1930])
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Fetishism', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1955), 21, pp. 152–57.
- \_\_\_\_\_, *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Penguin, 1984)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. by A. A. Brill (London: Routledge, 1919)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *The Uncanny*, trans. by David McLintock (London: Penguin Books, 2003 [1919])
- \_\_\_\_\_, *The 'Wolfman' and Other Cases*, trans. by Louise Adey Huish (London: Penguin, 2002 [1918])
- Freud, Sigmund, and Josef Breuer, *Studies in Hysteria*, trans. by Nicola Luckhurst (London: Penguin Books, 2004 [1952])
- Friedberg, Suzanne, *Fresh: A Perishable History* (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009)
- Fulmer, Richard, 'Carne Diem: What Meat Art Can Tell Us about Life and Death', *Meatpaper*, 5 (September 2008)  
<[http://www.meatpaper.com/articles/2010/0129\\_fulmer.html](http://www.meatpaper.com/articles/2010/0129_fulmer.html)> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Fung, Richard, 'Looking for My Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Video Porn', in *A Companion to Asian American Studies*, ed. by Kent A. Ono (Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 235–53
- Gallegmore, Isabel, 'A Dark Ecology: Environmental Cartoons, Jo Shapcott's Mad Cow Poems and the Motivational Function of the Comic Mode', *Green Letters*, 17:2 (2013), 151–63
- Galt, Rosalind, *Pretty: Film and the Decorative Image* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011)
- Gangs of New York*, dir. by Martin Scorsese (Miramax, 2002)
- Gibson, William, *Neuromancer* (London: Harper-Collins, 1993)

- Gill, Alison, 'Deconstruction Fashion: The Making of Unfinished, Decomposing and Reassembled Clothes', *Fashion Theory*, 2:1 (1998), 25–49
- Gilson, Erinn, 'Vulnerability, Ignorance and Oppression', *Hypatia*, 26:2 (2011), 308–32
- Gogol, Nikolai, *Diary of a Madman and Other Stories*, trans. and ed. by Andrew Crawford (New York: Dover Publications, 2006 [1835])
- Goodale, Greg, *Sonic Persuasion: Reading Sound in the Recorded Age* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011)
- Greer, Rachel, 'Beyond the Frame: Narratives of Otherness', in *Masquerade: Women's Contemporary Portrait Photography*, Vol. 2, ed. by Kate Newton and Christine Rolph (Cardiff: Ffotogallery, 2003), pp. 106–11
- Grosz, Elizabeth, 'Animal Sex: Libido as Desire and Death', in *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism*, ed. by Grosz and Elspeth Probyn (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 278–99
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics and Art* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2011)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Volatile Bodies: Towards A Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994)
- Hack, Jefferson, and Pinar Yolaçan, 'Day II, 26 May 2012 — Jefferson Hack. Pinar Yolaçan — Part I', (2012) <<http://vimeo.com/44512424>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Hallam, Elizabeth, et al., *Beyond the Body: Death and Social Identity* (Padstow: Routledge, 1999)
- Hanlon, Michael, 'Fake Meat: Is Science Fiction on the Verge of Becoming Fact?', *Guardian*, (22 June 2012)  
<<http://www.theguardian.com/science/2012/jun/22/fake-meat-scientific-breakthroughs-research>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Haraway, Donna, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003)



- \_\_\_\_\_, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2008)
- Harel, Naama, 'Challenging the Species Barrier in Metamorphosis Literature: The Case of Marie Darrieussecq's *Pig Tales*', *Comparative Critical Studies*, 2:3 (2005), 397–409
- Haritaworn, Jinathana, 'Decolonizing the Non/Human', in 'Dossier: Theorizing Queer Inhumanisms', *GLQ*, 21:2/3 (2015), 210–13
- Harrison, Colin, *American Culture in the 1990s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010)
- Hasan, Mehdi, 'Mehdi Hasan on the Not-So-Hidden Fear Behind Halal Hysteria', *New Statesman*, (9 May 2012)  
<<http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/politics/2012/05/halal-hysteria>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Hauser, Jens, 'Biotechnology as Mediality: Strategies of Organic Media Art', *Performance Research*, 11:4 (2006), 129–36
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Observations on an Art of Growing Interest: Toward a Phenomenological Approach to Art Involving Biotechnology', in *Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism and Technoscience*, ed. by Beatriz da Costa and Kavita Philip (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2008), pp. 83–104
- Haydaroglu, Mine, 'Interview with Pinar Yolaçan', *Art Slant*, (n.d.)  
<<http://www.artslant.com/ny/artists/rackroom/9439>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Hayles, N. Katherine, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999)
- Heartney, Eleanor, 'Becoming the Body', *Zhang Huan*, (2007)  
<<http://www.zhanghuan.com/ShowText.asp?id=30&sClassID=1>> [accessed 26 June 2015].
- Hemmings, Clare, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2011)
- Herbert, Matthew, *One Club* (Accidental Records, 2010)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *One One* (Accidental Records, 2010)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *One Pig* (Accidental Records, 2011)

- \_\_\_\_\_, *Plat du Jour* (Accidental Records, 2005)
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Plat du Jour: Reasons for the Record', *Matthew Herbert*, (23 June 2005)  
 <<http://matthewherbert.com/plat-du-jour-reasons-for-the-record/>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'That Sound', *Matthew Herbert*, (9 August 2010),  
 <<http://matthewherbert.com/that-sound/>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Hill, Katie, 'Why the Manic Grin? Hysterical Bodies: Contemporary Art as (Male) Trauma in Post-Cultural Revolution China', in *Burden or Legacy: From the Chinese Cultural Revolution to Contemporary Art*, ed. by Jiehong Jiang (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007), pp. 71–84
- Hird, Myra, 'Feminist Matters: New Materialist Considerations of Sexual Difference', *Feminist Theory*, 5:2 (2004), 223–32
- Hoad, Neville, 'Cosmetic Surgeries of the Social: Darwin, Freud and Wells and the Limits of Sympathy on *The Island of Dr Moreau*', in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, ed. by Lauren Berlant (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 187–218
- hooks, bell, 'No Love in the Wild', *NewBlackMan (in Exile)*, (6 September 2012)  
 <<http://newblackman.blogspot.co.uk/2012/09/bell-hooks-no-love-in-wild.html>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Horowitz, Roger, *Putting Meat on the American Table* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 2006)
- Horyn, Cathy, 'A Shelf Life So Short It Takes Your Breath Away', *New York Times*, (16 November 2004)  
 <<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=940CE6DD153FF935A25752C1A9629C8B63&pagewanted=all>> [accessed online 26 June 2015]
- Hughes, Alex, and Kate Ince, eds, *French Erotic Fiction: Women's Desiring Writing, 1880–1990* (Oxford and Washington, DC: Berg, 1996)
- Hwang, David Henry, *M. Butterfly* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1988)
- Institute of Contemporary Arts (London, England) and Centre for Contemporary Arts (Glasgow), *Bad Girls* (London: ICA, 1993)
- Isle de Jean Charles, *Isle de Jean Charles, Louisiana*, (2015)  
 <<http://www.isledejeancharles.com>> [accessed 26 June 2015]

- Jackson, Zakiyyah Iman, 'Outer Worlds: The Persistence of Race in Movement "Beyond the Human"', in 'Dossier: Theorizing Queer Inhumanisms', *GLQ*, 21:2/3 (2015), 215–18
- Jagose, Annamarie, *Orgasmology* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2012)
- Johnson, Lewis, 'More and Less Than Objects: Inapproachable Alterity and the Work of Jana Sterbak and Rosemarie Trochal', in *Other than Identity: The Subject, Politics and Art*, ed. by Juliet Steyn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 169–84
- Johnston, John, *The Allure of Machinic Life: Cybernetics, Artificial Life, and the New AI* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2008)
- Jones, Amelia, 'Performing the Wounded Body: Pain, Affect and the Radical Relationality of Meaning', *Parallax*, 15:4 (2009), 45–67
- Kahn, Douglas, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2001)
- Katcher, Joshua, 'Art and Animals: An Interview with Giovanni Aloï', *The Discerning Brute*, (4 March 2013)  
<<http://www.thediscerningbrute.com/2013/03/04/art-animals-an-interview-with-giovanni-aloi/>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Kendall, Karalyn, 'The Face of a Dog: Levinasian Ethics and Human/Dog Co-Evolution', in *Queering the Non/Human*, ed. by Noreen Giffney and Myra J. Hird (Padstow: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), pp. 185–204
- Kerr, John, *A Dangerous Method: The Story of Jung, Freud and Sabrina Spielrein* (New York: Atlantic Books, 2012)
- King-Smith, Dick, *The Sheep-Pig* (London: Penguin, 2010 [1983])
- Kirby, Vicki, 'Initial Conditions', *differences*, 23:3 (2012), 197–205
- Kirby, Vicki, and Elizabeth Wilson, 'Feminist Conversations with Vicki Kirby and Elizabeth A. Wilson', *Feminist Theory*, 12:2 (2011), 227–34
- Korsmeyer, Carole, *Gender and Aesthetics: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2004)

- Kretzer, Michelle, 'Will an Animal's Voice Help You Find Yours?', *PETA*, (4 January 2012) <<http://www.peta.org/blog/will-animal-s-voice-help-find/>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Kristeva, Julia, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982)
- Kuznets, Lois Rosnow, *When Toys Come Alive: Narratives of Animation, Metamorphosis and Development* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994)
- Lacan, Jacques, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function' in *Ecrits: The Complete First Edition in English*, trans. by Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006 [1966]), pp. 75–82
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Some Reflections on the Ego', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 34 (1953), 11–17
- Lalvai, Susan, *Photography, Vision and the Production of Modern Bodies* (Albany, NJ: SUNY Press, 1996)
- Lampkins-Fielder, Raina, 'Pinar Yolaçan: Maria', *Some/Things*, (n.d.) <<http://www.someslashthings.com/pinar-yolacan/>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Latour, Bruno, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring Sciences into Democracy*, trans. by Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004)
- Lawrence, Felicity, 'Where Did the 29% Horse in Your Tesco Burger Come From?', *Guardian*, (22 October 2013) <<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/oct/22/horsemeat-scandal-guardian-investigation-public-secrecy>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Leach, Joan, 'Madness, Metaphors and Miscommunication: The Rhetorical Life of Mad Cow Disease', in *The Mad Cow Crisis: Health and the Public Good*, ed. by Scott C. Ratzan (London: UCL Press, 1998), pp. 119–30
- LePan, Don, *Animals* (Berkeley: Soft Skull, 2010)
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude, *The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology* (London: Pimlico, 1994 [1969]).

- \_\_\_\_\_, *Totemism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963)
- Levy, Deborah, *Diary of a Steak* (London: Bookworks, 1997)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Swimming Home* (London: And Other Stories and Faber and Faber, 2012)
- Licht, Alan, *Sound Art: Beyond Music, Between Categories* (New York: Rizzoli International, 2007)
- Lin, Xiaoping, *Children of Marx and Coca Cola: Chinese Avant-Garde Art and Independent Cinema* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010)
- Lippit, Akira Mizuta, *Electric Animal: Towards a Rhetoric of Wildlife* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000)
- Lipsitz, George, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit From Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998)
- Lorimer, Jamie, and Clemens Driessen, 'Bovine Biopolitics and the Promise of Monsters in the Rewilding of Heck Cattle', *Geoforum*, 48 (2013), 249–59
- Lowe, Lisa, 'Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences', in *A Companion to Asian American Studies*, ed. by Kent A. Ono (Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 254–75
- Luciano, Dana, and Mel Y. Chen, eds, 'Dossier: Theorizing Queer Inhumanisms', *GLQ*, 21:2/3 (2015), 209–48
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Introduction: Has the Queer Ever Been Human?' *GLQ*, 21:2/3 (2015), 183–207
- Lury, Karen, *The Child in Film: Tears, Fears and Fairytales* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010)
- Luscombe, Belinda, 'Top 10 Fashion Statements', *Time*, (9 December 2010)  
 <[http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2035319\\_2034464\\_2034435,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2035319_2034464_2034435,00.html)> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Lye, Colleen, *America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893–1941* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005)
- McCabe, Patrick, *The Butcher Boy* (London: Picador, 1992)

- McCance, Dawne, *Critical Animal Studies: An Introduction* (Albany, NJ: SUNY Press, 2013)
- McCarthy, Cormac, *The Road* (London: Picador, 2006)
- McClintock, Anne, *Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995)
- McGarry, Kevin, 'Greater New Yorkers: Pinar Yolaçan', *New York Times*, (20 May 2010) <<http://tmagazine.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/05/20/greater-new-yorkers-pinar-yolacan/>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- McHugh, Susan, 'Animal Farm's Lessons for Literary (and) Animal Studies', *Humanimalia*, 1:1 (2009), 24–39
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Animal Stories: Narrating Across Species Lines* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011)
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Clever Pigs, Failing Piggeries', *Antennae*, 12 (2010), 19–25
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Real Artificial: Tissue-Cultured Meat, Genetically Modified Farm Animals and Fictions', *Configurations*, 18:1/2 (2010), 181–97
- McKay, Robert, 'BSE, Hysteria and the Representation of Animal Death: Deborah Levy's *Diary of a Steak*', in *Killing Animals*, ed. by The Animal Studies Group, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), pp. 145–69
- McMahon, Laura, 'Animal Agency in *Le Quattro volte*', *Screen*, 56:1 (2015), 108–14
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Cinema and Contact: The Withdrawal of Touch in Nancy, Bresson, Duras and Denis* (London: Legenda, 2012)
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Introduction: The Screen Animals Dossier', *Screen*, 56:1 (2015), 81–87
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed., 'The Screen Animals Dossier', *Screen*, 56:1 (2015), 81–120
- McQuinn, Austin, 'The Scandal of the Singing Dog', *Antennae*, 27 (2013), 90–101
- Maidment, Brian, *Dusty Bob: A Cultural History of Dustmen, 1780–1870* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007)

- Malamud, Randy, 'Americans Do Weird Things with Animals, or, Why Did the Chicken Cross the Road?', in *Animal Encounters*, ed. by Tom Tyler and Manuela Rossini (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2009), pp. 73–98
- Malone, Ailbhe, 'Matthew Herbert's Pig Project is a Strange Beast But Not the Only Animal Album on the (Butcher's) Block', *Guardian*, (24 September 2011) <<http://www.theguardian.com/music/2011/sep/24/matthew-herbert-canius-hatebeak>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Manning, Erin, *Relationscapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2009)
- Marks, Laura U., *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Trauma, Embodiment and the Senses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000)
- Mastai, Judith, 'The Anorexic Body: Contemporary Installation Art by Women Artists in Canada', in *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings*, ed. by Griselda Pollock (Trowbridge: Routledge, 1996), pp. 135–48.
- Meagher, Michelle, 'Jenny Saville and a Feminist Aesthetics of Disgust', *Hypatia*, 18:4 (2003), 23–42
- Meat Love*, dir. by Jan Švankmajer (Krátký Films, 1989)
- Melnick, Jeffrey, *9/11 Culture: America Under Construction* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009)
- Metcalf, Jacob, 'Meet Shmeat: Food System Ethics, Biotechnology and Re-Worlding Technoscience', *Parallax*, 19:1 (2013), 74–87
- Micale, Mark S., *Hysterical Men: The Hidden History of Male Nervous Illness* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2008)
- Michael, David, 'Toward a Dark Nature Recording', *Organised Sound*, 16:3 (2011), 206–10
- Milutis, Joe, 'The Biography of the Sample: Notes on the Hidden Contexts of Acousmatic Art', *Leonardo Music Journal*, 18 (2008), 71–75
- Minglu, Gao, ed., *Inside/Out: New Chinese Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998)

- Mitchell, Juliet, *Mad Men and Medusas: Reclaiming Hysteria and the Effect of Sibling Relationships on the Human Condition* (London: Penguin Books, 2000)
- Mitchell, Kaye, 'Raunch Versus Prude: Contemporary Sex Blogs and Erotic Memoirs by Women', *Psychology and Sexuality*, 3:1 (2012), 12–25
- Moran, Patricia, *Word of Mouth: Body Language in Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1996)
- Morgenstern, Naomi, 'Postapocalyptic Responsibility: Patriarchy at the End of the World in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*', *differences*, 25:2 (2014), 33–61
- Motte, Warren F., *Playtexts: Ludics in Contemporary Literature* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2005)
- Movius, Lisa, 'Free Spirit', *Official Ferrari Magazine*, (16 January 2012)  
<<http://magazine.ferrari.com/blog/2012/01/free-spirit/>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Muñoz, José Esteban, 'The Sense of Brownness', in 'Dossier: Theorizing Queer Inhumanisms', *GLQ*, 21:2/3 (2015), 209–10
- Murphy, Ann V., 'Corporeal Vulnerability and the New Humanism', *Hypatia*, 26:3 (2011), 576–90
- Myers, Natasha, 'Dance Your PhD: Embodied Animations, Body Experiments and the Affective Entanglements of Life Science Research', *Body and Society*, 18:1 (2012), 151–89
- Myers, Natasha, and Joe Dunit, 'Haptic Creativity and the Mid-Embodiments of Experimental Life', in *A Companion to the Anthropology of the Body and Embodiment*, ed. by Frances E. Mascia-Lees (Chicester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 239–61
- Nama, Adilifu, 'Brave Black Worlds: Black Superheroes as Science Fiction Ciphers', in *The Black Imagination: Science Fiction and the Speculative*, ed. by Sandra Jackson and Julie Moody-Freeman (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 7–18
- Neale, Steve, 'Masculinity as Spectacle', in *The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality*, ed. by Mandy Merck (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 277–90



- Negra, Diane, 'Structural Integrity, Historical Revision and the Post-9/11 Chick Flick', *Feminist Media Studies*, 8:1 (2008), 51–68
- Ngai, Sianne, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2012)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005)
- Noske, Barbara, *Humans and Other Animals* (London: Pluto Press, 1989)
- Nyong'o, Tavia, 'Little Monsters: Race, Sovereignty, and Queer Inhumanism in *Beasts of the Southern Wild*', *GLQ*, 21:2/3 (2015), 249–72
- Office of the Historian, 'Milestones: 1866–1898: Chinese Immigration and the Chinese Exclusion Acts', *US State Department: Office of the Historian*, (n.d.) <<http://history.state.gov/milestones/1866-1898/chinese-immigration>> [accessed 26 June 2015].
- O'Hagan, Sean, 'Auto Focus: Self-Portraits and the Art of Hiding in Plain Sight', *Guardian*, (8 August 2010) <<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2010/aug/08/photography-art>> [accessed 26 June 2015].
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Linder Sterling: 'Lady Gaga Didn't Acknowledge I Wore a Meat Dress First'', *Observer*, (12 January 2014) <<http://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2014/jan/12/linder-sterling-artist-punk-st-ives>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Oliver, Kelly, *Animal Lessons: How They Teach Us to Be Human* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009)
- O'Reilly, Kira, 'Marsyas — Beside Myself', in *Sk-Interfaces: Exploding Borders in Art, Science and Technology*, ed. by Jens Hauser (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), pp. 96–101
- Orwell, George, *Animal Farm: A Fairy Story* (London: Penguin, 2000 [1945])
- Oxford Dictionaries, 'Oxford English Dictionaries Word of the Year 2013', *Oxford Dictionaries*, (19 November 2013) <<http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/press-releases/oxford-dictionaries-word-of-the-year-2013/>> [accessed 26 June 2015]

- Paperburg, Bettina, and Marta Zarzycka, eds, *Essays in Carnal Aesthetics: Transgressive Imagery and Feminist Politics* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013)
- Parker-Starbuck, Jennifer, 'Chasing its Tail: Sensorial Circulations of *One Pig*', *Antennae*, 27 (2013), 102–13
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Pig Bodies and Vegetative States: Diagnosing the Symptoms of a Culture of Excess', *Women and Performance*, 18:2 (2008), 133–51
- Parry, Jovian, 'Gender and Slaughter in Popular Gastronomy', *Feminism and Psychology*, 20:3 (2010), 381–96
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Oryx and Crake and the New Nostalgia for Meat', *Society and Animals*, 17:3 (2009), 241–56
- Pattison, L., 'Producer Profile: The Sample Wizard', *Engineering and Technology*, 6:11 (2011), 36–37
- Patton, Venetria K., *Women in Chains: The Legacy of Slavery in Black Women's Fiction* (New York: SUNY Press, 2000)
- Pease, Donald, 'New Americanists: Revisionist Interventions into the Canon', *boundary 2*, 17:1 (1990), 1–37
- Peberdy, Donna, *Masculinity and Film Performance: Male Angst in Contemporary American Cinema* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011)
- Pedersen, Helena, 'Terror from the Stare: Visual Landscapes of Meat Production', *Antennae*, 14 (2010), 34–39
- Pettman, Dominic, 'Pavlov's Podcast: The Acousmatic Voice in the Age of MP3s', *differences*, 2:3 (2011), 140–67
- Perren, Richard, *Taste, Trade and Technology: The Development of the Industrial Meat Industry Since 1840* (Aldershot and Basingstoke: Ashgate, 2006)
- PETA, 'PETA's "In Vitro" Chicken Contest', *PETA*, (2014)  
<http://www.peta.org/features/vitro-meat-contest/> [accessed 26 June 2015].
- Phillips, John, *Forbidden Fictions: Pornography and Censorship in Twentieth-Century French Literature* (London and Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 1999)

- Pick, Anat, *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011)
- Pick, Anat, and Guinevere Naraway, eds, *Screening Nature: Cinema Beyond the Human* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2013)
- Pickavance, Jason, 'Gastronomic Realism: Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*: The Fight for Pure Food and the Magic of Mastication', *Food and Foodways*, 11:2/3 (2003), 87–112
- Pile, Steven, 'Spatialities of Skin: The Chafing of Skin, Ego and Second Skins in T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*', *Body and Society*, 17:4 (2011), 57–81
- Pinkerton, Nick, 'Beasts of the Southern Wild, Benh Zeitlin (review)', *Sight and Sound*, November 2012, pp. 82–3
- Plumwood, Val, 'Babe: The Tale of Speaking Meat', in *Animal, Anima, Animus*, ed. by Linda Weintraub, Marketta Seppälä and Jari-Pekka Vanhala (Pori: Pori Art Museum, 1998), pp. 243–64
- Pollock, Barbara, 'Art's New Superpower', *Vanity Fair*, (December 2007)  
<<http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2007/12/chineseart200712>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Potts, Annie, and Jovian Parry, 'Vegan Sexuality: Challenging Heteronormative Masculinity Through Meat-Free Sex', *Feminism and Psychology*, 20:1 (2010), 53–72
- Powrie, Phil, 'The W/hole and the Abject', in *The Trouble with Men: Masculinities in European and Hollywood Cinema*, ed. by Phil Powrie, Ann Davies and Bruce Babington (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), pp. 207–17
- Powell, Julie, *Cleaving: A Story of Meat, Marriage and Obsession* (London: Penguin Books, 2009)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Julie and Julia: My Year of Cooking Dangerously* (London: Penguin, 2005).
- Probyn, Elspeth, *Carnal Appetites: Foodsexidentities* (New York: Routledge, 2004)
- Ray, Nicholas, 'Interrogating the Human/Animal Relation in Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents*', *Humanimalia*, 6:1 (2014), 10–40

- Reader, Keith, *The Abject Object: Avatars of the Phallus in Contemporary French Theory, Literature and Film* (New York and Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006)
- Redmond, Sean, 'The Whiteness of *The Rings*', in *The Persistence of Whiteness: Race and Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*, ed. by Daniel Benardi (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 91–101
- Reyes, Alina, *The Butcher*, trans. by David Watson (London: Minerva Press, 1992 [1988])
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Lucie's Long Voyage*, trans. by David Watson (London: Methuen, 1992 [1990])
- Richardson, Michael, 'Jan Švankmajer and the Life of Objects', in *Surrealism and Cinema* (New York: Berg, 2006), pp. 121–34
- Richardson, Niall, 'The Queer Activity of Extreme Body-Building: Gender Dissidence, Auto-Eroticism and Hysteria', *Social Semiotics*, 14:1 (2004), 49–65
- Rinder, Lawrence R., et al., *Whitney Biennial 2002: 2002 Biennial Exhibition* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002)
- Riskin, Jessica, 'The Defecating Duck, or, The Ambiguous Origins of Artificial Life', *Critical Enquiry*, 29:4 (2003), 599–633
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Eighteenth-Century Wetware', *Representations*, 82 (2003), 97–125
- Riviere, Joan, 'Womanliness as Masquerade', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 10 (1929), 303–13
- The Road*, dir. by John Hillcoat (Dimension Films, 2009)
- Roberts, Adam, 'A Food Q&A with "*Beasts of the Southern Wild*" Screenwriter, Lucy Alibar', *Amateur Gourmet*, (25 July 2012)  
<<http://www.amateurgourmet.com/2012/07/a-food-qa-with-beasts-of-the-southern-wild-screenwriter-lucy-alibar.html>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Roth, Philip, *Indignation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2008)
- Russo, Mary, *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1994)

- Sample, Ian, 'Risk of Infecting Surgery Patients With CJD Not Taken Seriously, Say MPs', *Guardian*, (24 July 2014)  
 <<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jul/24/risk-infecting-surgery-patients-cjd-not-taken-seriously-mps>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- \_\_\_\_\_, '£200,000 Test-Tube Burger Marks Milestone in Future Meat-Eating', *Guardian*, (19 February 2012)  
 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2012/feb/19/test-tube-burger-meat-eating>> [accessed online 26 June 2015]
- Sansi, Roger, *Fetishes and Monuments: Afro-Brazilian Art and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Berghahn, 2007)
- Schlosser, Eric, *Fast Food Nation: What the All-American Meal is Doing to the World* (New York: Penguin, 2002)
- Schneider, Rebecca, 'Performance Remains', in *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, ed. by Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), pp. 137–50
- Scott, A.O., 'She's the Man of This Swamp: Review of *Beasts of the Southern Wild*', *New York Times*, (26 June 2012)  
 <[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/27/movies/beasts-of-the-southern-wild-directed-by-benh-zeitlin.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/27/movies/beasts-of-the-southern-wild-directed-by-benh-zeitlin.html?_r=0)> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Seltzer, Mark, *Bodies and Machines* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992)
- Seul Contre Tous*, dir. by Gaspar Noé (Momentum Pictures, 1998)
- Shankar Chakrabarty, Ananda, 'Soulage's Paintings and Kuspit's Criticism', in *Dialectical Conversions: Donald Kuspit's Art Criticism*, ed. by David Craven and Brian Winkenweder (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), pp. 173–89
- Shapcott, Jo, *Her Book: Poems 1988–1998* (London and New York: Faber and Faber, 2000)
- Shapiro, Nick, 'Dreamscapes of Dispossession', *Guernica*, (26 February 2013),  
 <<https://www.guernicamag.com/daily/nick-shapiro-landscapes-of-dispossession/>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Sharp, Lesley, 'Hybrid Bodies of the Scientific Imaginary', in *A Companion to the Anthropology of the Body and Embodiment*, ed. by Francis E. Mascia Lees (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 262–75

- Shearman, Zoe, et al., *Jayne Parker: Filmworks, 79–00* (Exeter: Spacex Gallery, 2000)
- Shell, Marc, 'Animals That Talk', *differences*, 15:1 (2004), 84–107
- Shildrick, Margrit, *Embodying the Monster: Encounters with the Vulnerable Self* (London: Sage, 2002)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Leaky Bodies and Boundaries: Feminism, Postmodernism and (Bio)Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1997)
- Shone, Tom, 'American Exotic', *Intelligent Life*, (September/October 2012)  
<<http://moreintelligentlife.co.uk/content/arts/american-exotic>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Showalter, Elaine, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture* (New York: Virago, 1987 [1985])
- Shukin, Nicole, *Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009)
- Silverman, Kaja, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988)
- Simonini, Ross, 'White People are the Interior', *Interview*, (n.d)  
<<http://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/william-popel#>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Sinclair, Upton, *The Jungle* (New York: Signet Classics, 2001 [1906])
- Sisco King, Claire, 'The Man Inside: Trauma, Gender and the Nation in *The Brave One*', *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 27:2 (2010), 111–30
- Skloot, Rebecca, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* (New York: Pan Books, 2011)
- Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, 'Falling Asleep with a Pig', *Antennae*, 13 (2010), 38–48
- Sobchack, Vivian, 'Animation and Automation, or, The Incredible Effortfulness of Being', *Screen*, 50:4 (2009), 375–91
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004)

- Soderberg, Brandon, 'Matthew Herbert: *One Pig*', *Pitchfork*, (14 October 2011) <<http://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/15930-matthew-herbert-one-pig/>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Speer, Richard, 'Couture von Carne', *Willamette Week*, (2 March 2005) <<http://www.wweek.com/portland/print-article-4148-print.html>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Springer, Claudia, *Electronic Eros: Bodies and Desire in the Post-Industrial Age* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996)
- Stacey, Jackie, 'Wishing Away Ambivalence', *Feminist Theory*, 15:1 (2014), 39–49
- Stacey, Jackie, and Lucy Suchman, 'Animation and Automation — The Liveliness and Labours of Bodies and Machines', *Body and Society*, 18:1 (2012), 1–46
- Sterne, Jonathan, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2003)
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed., *The Sound Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2012)
- Sterne, Jonathan, and Tara Rodgers, 'The Poetics of Signal Processing', *differences*: 22:2/3 (2011), 31–53
- Stewart, Susan, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1993)
- Strong, Jeremy, 'The Modern Offal Eater', *Gastronomica*, 6:2 (2006), 30–39
- Suchman, Lucy, 'Subject Objects', *Feminist Theory*, 12:2 (2011), 119–45
- Sylvester, David, 'Great Interviews of the Twentieth Century: "One Continuous Accident Mounting on Top of Another"', *Guardian*, (13 September 2007) <<http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2007/sep/13/greatinterviews>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- SymbioticA, 'SymbioticA: About Us', *SymbioticA: The University of Western Australia*, (2015) <<http://www.symbiotica.uwa.edu.au/home/about>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Tai, Mikala, 'Branded and Plated: The Globalised Chinese Body', *Intersections*, 23 (2010) <<http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue23/tai.htm>> [accessed 26 June 2015]

- Taylor, Janelle S., 'Surfacing the Body Interior', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 34 (2005), 741–56
- The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, dir. by Tobe Hooper (Bryanston Distributing, 1974)
- Theweleit, Klaus, *Male Fantasies: Volume 1: Woman, Floods, Bodies, History* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987)
- Trainor, James, 'Ain't No Such Thing as Superman', *Frieze*, 83 (May 2004)  
 <[http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/aint\\_no\\_such\\_thing\\_as\\_superman/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/aint_no_such_thing_as_superman/)>  
 [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Twine, Richard, 'Physiognomy, Phrenology and the Temporality of the Body', *Body and Society*, 8:1 (2002), 67–88
- \_\_\_\_\_, 'Rereading the "Animal Industrial Complex" — A Concept and Method for Critical Animal Studies?', *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 10:1 (2012), 12–39
- Tyler, Tom, 'Introduction: The Case of the Camel', in *Animal Encounters*, ed. by Tyler and Manuela Rossini (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2009), pp. 1–12
- Vialles, Noémie, *Animal to Edible*, trans. by J. A. Underwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)
- Vidal, John, 'Race to Serve Up Artificial Chicken For a \$1m Prize', *Guardian*, (21 January 2012) <<http://www.theguardian.com/science/2012/jan/21/artificial-chicken-food-prize>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Vine, Richard, *New China, New Art* (Slovakia: Prestel, 2008)
- Vint, Sherryl, *Animal Alterity and the Question of the Animal* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010)
- Wagley, Catherine, 'Marina Abramović's MOCA Gala Controversy: Jeffrey Deitch Confronted and the Performers Speak Out', *LA Weekly*, (19 December 2011)  
 <<http://www.laweekly.com/publicspectacle/2011/12/19/marina-abramovics-moca-gala-controversy-jeffrey-deitch-confronted-and-the-performers-speak-out>> [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Warwick, Alexandra, and Dani Cavallaro, *Fashioning the Frame: Boundaries, Dress and Body* (London: Berg, 1998)



- Watson, Scott, “‘Pornography Disguised as Art’: Some Recent Episodes Concerning Censorship and the Visual Arts in Canada”, in *Interpreting Censorship in Canada*, ed. by Allan C. Hutchinson and Klaus Petersen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 221–40
- Weed, Elizabeth, and Ellen Rooney, eds, ‘The Sense of Sound’, *differences*, 22:2/3 (2011), 1–314
- Wells, H. G., *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (London: Penguin, 2005 [1896])
- Weil, Kari, ‘A Report on the Animal Turn’, *differences*, 21:2 (2010), 1–23
- Wiegman, Robyn, *Object Lessons* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012)
- Williams, Linda, ‘Film Bodies: Gender, Genre and Excess’, *Film Quarterly*, 44:4 (1991), 2–13
- , ‘Pornography, Porno, Porn: Thoughts on a Weedy Field’, *Porn Studies*, 1:1/2 (2014), 24–40
- Wizansky, Sasha, and Amy Standen, ‘Hello from Meatpaper’, *Meatpaper*, (September 2007)  
[http://www.meatpaper.com/articles/2007/1217\\_edletter.html](http://www.meatpaper.com/articles/2007/1217_edletter.html) [accessed 26 June 2015]
- Wolfe, Cary, *Animal Rites: American Culture, The Discourse of Species and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003)
- , *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010)
- Won Yin Wang, Winnie, *Van Gogh on Demand: China and the Readymade* (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013)
- Wood, Martin, ‘Agency and Organization: Towards a Cyborg-Consciousness’, *Human Relations*, 31:10 (1998), pp. 1209–18
- Woods Bezan, Sarah Marie, ‘From the Mortician’s Scalpel to the Butcher’s Knife: Towards an Animal Thanatology’, *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 10:1 (2012), 119–37

Yaeger, Patricia, 'Beasts of the Southern Wild and Dirty Ecology', *Southern Spaces*, (February 2013) <<http://www.southernspaces.org/2013/beasts-southern-wild-and-dirty-ecology>> [accessed 26 June 2015]

Yancy, George, ed., *What White Looks Like: African-American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question* (New York: Routledge, 2004)

Yinghua Lu, Carol, 'How it Appears', *Frieze*, 129 (March 2010)  
<[http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/how\\_it\\_appears/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/how_it_appears/)> [accessed 26 June 2015]

Young Lee, Paula, 'Conclusion: Why Look at Slaughterhouses?' in *Meat, Modernity and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse* (Lebanon: University of New Hampshire Press, 2008), pp. 237–43

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Introduction: Housing Slaughter', in *Meat, Modernity and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse* (Lebanon: University of New Hampshire Press, 2008), pp. 1–9

\_\_\_\_\_, ed., *Meat, Modernity and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse* (Lebanon: University of New Hampshire Press, 2008)

Zhang, Huan, 'My New York', *Zhang Huan*, (2002)  
<<http://www.zhanghuan.com/ShowWorkContent.asp?id=19&iParentID=16&mid=1>> [accessed 26 June 2015]

Zurr, Ionat, and Oron Catts, 'Are the Semi-Living Semi-Good or Semi-Evil?', *Technoetic Arts*, 1:1 (2003), 47–60